# THE

# COUNTRY CURATE.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "THE SUBALTERN."

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A man he was to all the country dear,
And passing rich with forty pounds a year.

GOLDSMITH.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE MISER.

I HAD been an inhabitant of St. Alphage rather more than two years, when it was announced to me, one Saturday afternoon, as I sat at dinner, that the clerk of Holy Cross, the parish immediately adjoining my own, desired to see me. The man was immediately admitted; and in a blunt and somewhat abrupt tone, informed me, that Mr. Davies, the curate, being unable to discharge his own duty on the morrow, would be much obliged if I would assist him. Now of this Mr. Davies, though a countryman of my own, and a person of long standing in the diocese and neighbourhood,

I had never, to my surprise, seen any thing. He had neither visited nor taken other notice of me since I came; and I confess that I found it difficult, on the instant, to repress a feeling of something like indignation, that he should thus unceremoniously call upon me for professional help. Nevertheless, as the case was urgent, being explained to be one of sudden indisposition, I did not hesitate as to the course to be adopted, but met the clerk's demand with an assurance, that provided he could so distribute the hours, as not to clash with the order of my own services, I would take care that his church should not be shut up. The man readily undertook to manage this matter, and we parted.

Having entered into this arrangement, I not unnaturally began to make inquiries concerning the condition and circumstances of the man whom I had undertaken to serve. I found that he was a noted character in the county, having been for eight and twenty years curate of Holy Cross, during a large portion of which he had held, along with his curacy, a valuable living in the Marsh; and that through-

out the whole of that extended period he had never been known to be absent a single hour from home. Every one whom I questioned on the subject, admitted him to be remarkably attentive to his public duties: he was allowed to be in the habit of visiting the sick, catechising the children, and instructing his people generally, with the utmost care; and there had never, as far as I could learn, been so much as a whisper raised against the strict morality and integrity of his private dealings. Yet his habits were not such as to obtain for him the love, they scarcely commanded the respect, of those among whom he resided. Shy and reserved to the last degree, he not only avoided all social intercourse with his neighbours, but treated every advance made to form his acquaintance, with rudeness. Penurious, too, and niggardly, he denied himself all the comforts, and could scarcely be said to indulge in the necessaries, of life; for his apparel was not merely shabby, but mean, and his style of living, it was whispered, was such as the poorest pauper in the workhouse needed not to envy. His sole domestic was an old Welsh-

woman, whom he brought with him when he came, and who performed every office about his person, which he was either unable or unwilling to perform himself. She was his housekeeper, laundress, cook, and scullion; yet the manner of the one towards the other resembled more that of a parent towards a child, than of a menial servant towards her master. As to their more private proceedings,—the tenor of their social existence,—no one could tell what it was, because no one, even by chance, ever surprised them at a meal. It was given out, indeed, that they ate and drank at the same table, which was seldom spread with more expensive viands than potatoes and water; but of this no one could speak accurately, because no one enjoyed an opportunity of judging. All that could be asserted with confidence on the subject was, that Mr. Davies ran no scores with butcher, baker, grocer, or brewer; and hence, the produce of his little garden, which he kept in order with his own hands, was believed to contribute mainly to their support.

A description such as the preceding, whilst it very satisfactorily accounted for the total

absence of all previous friendly communication between us, excited, as may be imagined, no little curiosity on my part, to learn something farther of an individual so eccentric. In spite of the reported incivility of his behaviour to those who had already exhibited a disposition to pay him attention, I determined, as soon as the service of the day should end, to wait upon him; and I flattered myself that the peculiarity of the circumstances, under which my visit was made, would at least secure for me admission. I kept to my resolution; and, as the event proved, I had not miscalculated my grounds of action.

It was on a gusty day in February, when the lengthened daylight renders the sense of cold more acute, that I walked over to Holy Cross, according to my engagement, and performed the evening service. There was a tolerably large and a very attentive congregation, every member of which showed some mark of respect as I passed through the church-yard; but there was one person in particular, whom I observed lingering beside the stile, as if waiting till I should approach, with the design of addressing

me. The loiterer was an old woman, apparently about seventy years of age; short in stature, and very thin; with a sharp and care-worn countenance, dark eyes, grey, or rather grizzled hair, and a sallow complexion. She was dressed in a full-flowing, long-waisted stuff gown, red stockings, and high-heeled shoes, with long wash-leather gloves that reached to her elbows, and a ruffled chemise; whilst a silk cloak, that had once been black, was thrown over her shoulders, and a bonnet of the same materials, and apparently of the same antiquity, covered her head. Her appearance altogether was very striking, and her manner and address (for I was not deceived in my suspicion that she waited to address me) were not less so.

"Mr. Davies desires me to thank you," said she, with a strong Welsh accent, "for the favour you have done him, and is sorry he cannot ask you to stay and dine; but he is too ill himself to eat, and will not trouble you to call upon him. He has commissioned me, however, to satisfy you for your trouble, if you will tell me how much there is to pay."

She thrust her hand into her pocket as she

spoke, and had already extracted a leathern bag, ere I could arrest the movement. "Nay, my good woman," said I, motioning to her at the same time to put up her purse, "you don't suppose that I expect payment? I am very happy in being able to serve Mr. Davies, but I am no jobber in clerical duties."

The old woman looked the picture of astonishment at this speech. "Well, I am sure," said she, "it is very kind in you; but Mr. Davies will never, I am positive, submit to accept a favour at the hands of any man. Besides, you do yourself wrong, Sir:—'the labourer is worthy of his hire.'"

"Very true," replied I, "the labourer is, indeed, worthy of his hire; but the only hire which brother ought to think of offering to brother, is good-will; and I shall consider myself amply remunerated, if I secure that recompense from Mr. Davies. It was my intention to wait upon him, and I would gladly do so, provided it be not disagreeable."

"No, sure, it is never disagreeable to Mr. Davies to see his friends; but—but—are you determined not to take the money?"

"Quite determined on that head," answered I, smiling, "and equally so to see Mr. Davies, if I can."

"Well, now, this is strange," said the old woman, apparently speaking to herself, "not to take a guinea when it is offered, and honestly earned! Of course, he expects something to eat and drink, and he ought to have it too. But—"

"My good woman," said I, interrupting her, for I guessed to what her soliloquy tended, "I do not desire any refreshment; I never eat or drink at this hour, and will not therefore take advantage of your hospitality. My wish is simply to become acquainted with a neighbour, who has a double claim upon my services, as a brother-clergyman, and as a countryman."

"Are you from Denbighshire?" asked my new acquaintance, with a tone of deep feeling, and an instantaneous glistening of the eye.

"No," replied I, "but I am from Caernarvon."

"Ah, well, it is the neighbouring county," said she, still labouring under manifest excitement, "and a glorious county it is; but not so beautiful as Denbigh. There is no place in

Caernarvon to be named with fair Llanrwst—nor in all the world besides; but what matters it?—Lack-a-day! the stranger holds it now; and the ancient race are driven out, like the swallow in the autumn—not like the swallow, to return again in spring-time.—Well, well, I think he will not refuse to see you; I am sure he ought not."

There was something very affecting in the energy of manner with which the old woman gave utterance to these few but mournful words; they were spoken in a tone which implied plainly enough that they came from the heart; and I felt that a being who could thus express herself, was no fit subject either of ill-natured ridicule, or idle curiosity. A similar revolution took place, I knew not why, in my ideas respecting her master. The desire of seeing and holding a few moments' conversation with an eccentric, which had alone actuated me in seeking the promised interview, now gave place to other and more worthy sentiments; and I followed my conductress in a far more Christian frame of mind than actuated me when our conversation began.

"You will find him but ill lodged, and ill

tended," said she, as we proceeded onwards, "for sickness is hard to bear; and I am not so able, as I once was, to see to matters:—but you will find that, like his forefathers, he has the spirit of a gentleman, that will not bend to Fortune, let her beat upon it as she will. It was not thus that *he* ought to have received *you*. But times are changed; and money, not blood, now makes the man."

We had by this time reached the Parsonage-house, an inelegant and rude pile, made up of shreds and patches apparently stuck together, without order, regularity or taste, as the convenience of each new incumbent dictated. It was a large two-storied building, and bore about it manifest proofs, that of late, at least, it had been only partially inhabited. The window-shutters were closed in almost every chamber, the glass in numerous panes was supplanted by wood, and the frame-works exhibited symptoms of having held little intercourse with paint or putty, during the last dozen years. The garden, however, was neat and orderly,—as neat, at least, as an enclosed plot of ground can be, which is devoted exclusively to the cultivation of esculents; for it could boast neither of flowers nor ornamental shrubs,

and the very walks were pared down to the narrowest limits: a portion of this we traversed, and turning away from the front entrance, over which the spiders had long drawn a mantle, we walked round to the back of the house. The old woman now took a key from her pocket, and opening a door, ushered me into a sort of washhouse. It was bare in the roof to the tiles, wholly unprovided with implements of convenience, and struck a chill to the heart by its dreary and comfortless appearance. We made no pause here, however, but passing on through what was doubtlessly intended for a kitchen, but which, like the washhouse, seemed to have remained unoccupied for half a century, we proceeded, by a long dark lobby, towards a room which my guide denominated the parlour, but which to my eye appeared to partake at least as much of the character of a vestibule as of a living apartment. It was a low-roofed, gloomy chamber, some eighteen or twenty feet long, by fourteen in width, and totally destitute of every article of furniture, beyond three old oak chairs, and a deal table. Not a shred of carpet covered the floor; there was no fender in front of the empty

grate, but in its room a part of the broken ring of a cart-wheel, of which another part supplied the place of a poker. A horn inkstand, with the stump of a pen sticking in it; three deal shelves suspended from a nail in the wall, and covered with a few ragged books and dirty papers; these, with a solitary iron pot standing upon the brick hearth, completed the garnishing of the chamber, in which my aged guide requested me to sit down and wait till she should inform her master of my arrival.

I sat down as she requested, not without a painful sense of the degradation to which parsimonious habits reduce their slave; for every thing about me was dreary and dispiriting. The paper hung here and there in strips from the wall, here and there it was fastened up with pins, or rudely connected by bands of canvass pasted across; and the ceiling, black and dingy, seemed ready to fall every moment at one or other of the cracks which in great numbers ran through it. The absence of fire too was keenly felt; for the performance of the church-service had heated me; and the extreme chill of such a room struck the more forcibly in consequence of previous exertion.

Happily, however, I was not left long to ruminate over the probable effects of such a change. In less than five minutes after she quitted me, the old woman returned, and begging me to follow, led the way to her master's chamber.

We mounted a wooden stair, and traversed a wooden landing-place, both of them, like the parlour below, uncontaminated by the presence of any covering. At the extremity of the latter a door stood ajar, and the female pushing it open, pronounced my name in a loud voice, and formally introduced me to her master. I advanced, and beheld seated, or rather reclining, in an old-fashioned high-back chair, with pillows placed behind and on each side of him, the individual concerning whom so strange an account had reached me. He was a tall thin man, apparently about fifty years of age, exceedingly pale, with a sunken cheek, and a hollow eye, but bearing about him traces of very considerable beauty, upon which care or sickness, or both, had made deep inroads. His dress was a clean, thread-bare, white flannel night-gown, which wrapped him entirely round; upon his head he wore a woollen night-cap, likewise perfectly clean; and the cover-

ings of his pillows, together with the counterpane on the bed, were all white as the skill of the bleacher could make them. Yet, in spite of so much attention to cleanliness, the bed-room, not less than the parlour, bore witness to the penurious disposition of its occupant; for it was as dreary and ill-assorted a dormitory as I had ever entered,—even in the cottages of the poorest of my own parishioners. A truckle bedstead, without posts or curtains, occupied one extremity, in front of which a bit of sacking was substituted for a rug. A large trunk supplied the place of a chest of drawers; there was but one chair in addition to that occupied by the Curate, the rush bottom of which had given way; and a solitary small table seemed to do the triple duty of toilet, writing-desk, and dinner-board. A few sticks were burning in the fire-place, for the purpose, as it seemed, of cooking, rather than to give warmth; for a moderate-sized saucepan simmered over them; and the supply of spare fuel was so scanty, as to denote that it would not be needed after the contents of the vessel should have been sufficiently subjected to the process of boiling. I was very much shocked, as well as greatly

astonished, at the desolate aspect of the chamber; yet was there something in the air of its occupant calculated to excite other feelings besides those of disgust and contempt.

Mr. Davies made an effort to rise as I entered; but his strength was not adequate to carry him through, and he immediately fell back again.

"I am too feeble to do the honours as I ought," said he with a bitter smile; "I must therefore request you to take a seat,—that is, if you can find one."

I sat down accordingly on the edge of the broken chair, and Mr. Davies continued.

"My housekeeper informs me that you have declined the remuneration which is legally your due, and that you required a personal introduction to me as the price of your services. I am sorry for it: first, because I do not love to lay myself under an obligation to a stranger; and next, because I never wish to see a stranger within my doors. If you have any business to discuss, say on; if not, take my thanks, and let our interview be as brief as possible."

I was not a little perplexed, as may well be

imagined, by such an opening to our dialogue, not knowing very well how to meet it, or what to say in reply. How I did express myself, indeed, I have forgotten; but before Mr. Davies could offer any rejoinder, the old housekeeper, greatly to my relief, took part in the conversation.

"Nay, now, honey dear! didn't you promise to meet this gentleman as a friend? Didn't I tell you that he came from Caernarvonshire? —that he was in some degree a countryman, and that he deserved civiller treatment at your hands than a mere Saxon? It arn't like you to say a rude thing to any one, and least of all to a Welshman."

"I beg pardon," said I, "if I have inadvertently done that which is disagreeable to you. I was told of your illness, and considered it no more than an act of common civility as well as of duty, to inquire after you."

"Well, and could not that be done abroad? Could not Margery tell you all that you needed to know, or had any right to pry into? Besides, it is not your coming here that offends me.— You see that I am poor—very poor,—that I live

meanly and fare hardly; but there is nothing disgraceful in that; and I care not if all the world knew it. But your refusal to be paid for your services wounds my pride. Tell me how I may clear scores with you, and then perhaps we shall better understand one another."

"By doing the same friendly act for me, should I hereafter stand in need of it, which I have just done for you."

"Be it so," replied he: "I take you at your word; and though I do not wish your illness, I shall be glad to hear that business or amusement may have taken you hence, as soon as my health is sufficiently re-established to permit my fulfilling my part of the contract. And now, good evening to you,—the day wears apace,—and you probably desire to reach home ere it be dark."

"But the gentleman will take a little refreshment," interposed Margery. "I will fetch up a —hem,—hem."

"Fetch up, old woman!" interrupted her master,—"what can you fetch up? Here are a few potatoes and a morsel of pork on the fire, Mr. Williams; and the water of our well is ex-

cellent; if you feel disposed to partake of my humble fare, you are welcome."

"La now, honey dear!" said Margery, "how can you joke so? My master loves to make things out worse than they are. We have better fare than that to offer, as you may believe, Sir."

"My good Margery," replied Mr. Davies, in a tone of mingled kindness and irony, "if I love to make things appear worse, you love an hundred times more to make them appear better. Mr. Williams has, I doubt not, learned from a variety of sources how I live; and has honoured me with a visit, that he might have the satisfaction of conversing a moment or two with the Miser."

"You do me wrong, Sir," replied I, "and scarcely do yourself justice. Whatever idle tales I may have heard, made little impression upon me; and of the epithet which you have just bestowed upon yourself, I do not believe you deserving. Causes there may be for your present mode of existence; but I cannot think that the unworthy thirst of accumulation is numbered among them."

" I thank you for your kind opinion," said the sick man, a slight flush passing over his cheek as he spoke, and an expression of melancholy pleasure darting from his eye. " I know not upon what grounds you have formed it; but perhaps—No matter, no matter."

I perceived that I had struck a chord, which vibrated to the heart of my new acquaintance; and that, by so doing, I had produced an impression in my own favour, of which I hastened to take advantage. " You are not, I fear," said I, " likely to regain your strength immediately; and I am sure that any premature effort to resume the course of your duties, would inevitably throw you back. I trust, therefore, that you will permit me, in virtue of our compact just concluded, to supply your place for a few Sundays longer."

" It is not pleasant," replied he, " to take advantage of the good-nature of one, whom I see no chance of being able to recompense as he deserves; but if I feel really unfit for the exertion next Sunday, your offer shall be accepted with thanks."

"And you will permit me to come and see you again," continued I, rising as I spoke.

He looked earnestly at me, as if he would have pierced into my very thoughts, and read there the motive which dictated this proposal. The examination was not, as it seemed, in my disfavour; for, holding out his long, thin hand, and grasping mine, he said in a softened tone,—

"Certainly, I will always be glad to see a man who can look on such a sight as this, and yet believe, that one surrounded by all the external marks of penuriousness and squalor, can yet be free from the debasing propensities of a miser."

"Now, God bless thee for a good soul and a true Christian!" said the old woman, as she conducted me down-stairs, and led me through lobby, kitchen, and washhouse. "This will do my poor master more good than all the stuff in the doctor's shop, of which I cannot persuade him to swallow a mouthful. You will be sure to come again,—and come before Sunday, if possible, that the impression made may not have time to grow faint, and his old humours return."

I promised faithfully to be at the back-door, on the day after the morrow; and wishing my conductress good evening, I bent my steps homewards, full of "strange thoughts and fitful fancies."

## CHAPTER II.

I NEED scarcely say that the effects produced upon me by the occurrences of this eventful day, were of a nature too complex and too strange to be soon or easily effaced. The voice, manner, air, and general address of my neighbour Curate, haunted me like a passion; and I could not divest myself of the persuasion, that, singular as his habits were, they were not the offspring of mere avarice. I would not permit myself to believe that deep feeling—and of deep feeling Davies was clearly possessed—could possibly exist in the heart of him whose soul was bartered away to Mammon; yet I was as little able to reconcile to my own notions of what a man owes to himself, and to his position in society, the unaccountably sordid mode

of existence of which I had so lately been an eye-witness. In few words, both Davies and his propensities were to me a riddle, which not all my efforts—and I made many—were competent to read, and the reading of which, I at last, though somewhat reluctantly, left to be made out by time and circumstances.

But though I soon ceased to speculate on the causes of Mr. Davies's conduct, I was by no means unmindful of my engagement with his housekeeper, nor careless in keeping it. On the contrary, I set out at an early hour after breakfast on the Tuesday, reached Holy Cross Parsonage long before noon, and received from the kind-hearted old woman a cordial and flattering welcome.

"Now, I am as glad to see you," said she, familiarly seizing my hand, "as if you came with a thousand pounds in your pocket, all for the use of my beloved master. I don't know what there was about you, but let me tell you as a thing of which you have great cause to be proud,—that he talked of you, over and over again, after you went away; and that he longs to shake you by the hand just as much as I did.

Heaven's blessing be upon you! Walk up, walk up. You will find him much as you left him on Sunday evening, only a small thought better,—praise be to Heaven for the same!"

So saying, she once more guided me through the cheerless kitchen and passage; and walking before to show the way, led me up-stairs, and ushered me again into Mr. Davies's chamber.

I found the Curate, as to health, pretty nearly in the same state in which he was when our acquaintance began; and in dress, position, and appearance, in no respect altered. In his manner, however, a marked change was visible. He made no effort on this occasion to rise, and affected nothing of that haughty and austere deportment, with which he saw fit to open our conference on a previous occasion; but, holding out his hand, bade me hearty welcome, and expressed himself delighted to see me. I was greatly pleased, as may be imagined, at finding that this time, at least, my presence was not regarded as an intrusion; and our conversation went on easily, almost gaily for a season, and on general topics.

All this tended, in no slight degree, at once

to whet my curiosity, and to give an additional intensity to the interest which I had already taken in the poor man's fate. I saw, however, at a glance, that any abrupt or sudden advance on my part towards familiar and intimate communication, so far from leading to the result which I desired, would produce an effect directly the reverse. Davies was evidently a person of acute sensibility, perhaps of morbid feeling, which the slightest approach to prying would alarm; and in whom an antipathy once excited, were it even for a moment, would not be easily allayed. Such a man's confidence was not to be gained by appearing to court it; far less by adventuring upon leading questions touching himself; and hence I felt, that however pure the motives might be which impelled me to inquire into his history, no such inquiry could be hazarded if I desired our acquaintance to last. A variety of minute circumstances, likewise, led me to conjecture, that offers of friendship, or of kind and neighbourly attentions, if made at all, must be made to him with peculiar caution. I judged that he was either too poor, or too mercenary, to afford himself

the kind of diet which his delicate health required; yet I could not venture to propose sending from my own house any one of the many little comforts which we could easily furnish, and which to the sick in general are extremely acceptable. I was vexed at all this, not so much because it kept me still in the dark with respect to points on which I ardently desired to be enlightened, as because I was satisfied that Davies already suffered, and would continue to suffer, from his own perverseness. Nevertheless, as there was really no help for the matter, I determined to give way to circumstances, should I find that the old housekeeper was as insensible to my friendly advances as her master.

I sat with Davies on this occasion upwards of an hour, during which he showed himself in the light of a well-informed, gentlemanly, and accomplished person. It was very evident, moreover, that our gratification was mutual; for when I wished him good day, he begged to know, of his own accord, when he might expect a repetition of my call. Of course, I assured him that no great while would elapse ere we

met again; and we parted, as men usually do when they have each unexpectedly found, where they least expected to find him, a companion suited to their tastes.

"It grieves me," said I to the old woman, as I passed the washhouse threshold, "to see Mr. Davies so poorly supplied with comforts in his illness. Not that I doubt his ability to procure them," continued I;—for I observed a storm gathering over the Welshwoman's brows, who treated every allusion to poverty as the grossest insult,—"but I know from experience how careless bachelors become in these respects, and how naturally their housekeepers slide into their humours, and adopt their prejudices. Now, though a bachelor myself, there are ladies in my family, who have never permitted me to fall into these vagaries; and they would gladly supply my good neighbour with jellies and such like, would he but accept these acts of friendship at their hands."

The cloud which had begun to collect on Margery's brow, though it assumed a lighter cast, did not absolutely disperse. "I am glad for his sake," said she sharply, "that your proposal

was not made in his presence. I know that he loves your society, and I hope that he will love it yet more; but I am as sure as mortal can be of any thing, that if he once heard you talk of sending him food, drink, or clothing, he would never speak to you again. Your company and conversation may prove of vital service to him; but as you desire to number him among your friends, say nothing more of his poor style of living, nor dream of bettering it."

I was satisfied that the old woman spoke the truth; so I walked away, determined to let things take their course, for better or for worse.

Mr. Davies's illness continued with little abatement for three weeks, during which period I performed all his duties, and spent a portion of every other day in his company. No man could show more unequivocally, by his general manner, that he felt himself obliged; yet was there at all times a restraint upon his language, which hindered him from saying so in terms one whit more exaggerated than might have been used on the commonest occasion. It seemed as if two principles struggled the one against the other,—generosity and pride;

the first of which prompted him to make no secret of his true sentiments, whilst the last hindered him from ever embodying them in words. But I was not covetous of praise. It was enough for me to experience the consciousness of doing as I would be done by; whilst the fact of being welcomed by one who had admitted no one throughout twenty years to his confidence, supplied more legitimate ground for self-congratulation, than would have been furnished by professions the most voluminous and the most fulsome.

At the end of the above-mentioned period, Davies so far recovered, as to resume once more the tenor of his professional life. I of course saw less of him, for a season after this, than I had done in his illness,—for he never came to me; and after calling several times, without inducing him to return the visits, I ceased to go to him. But an accidental circumstance brought us again, as it were, to each other's knowledge; and from that day the renewed intimacy continued without farther interruption.

It chanced one day, somewhere about six

months after my last call at Holy Cross, that business or amusement induced me to stroll down towards Folkstone. I saw, as I descended the hill, a figure moving towards me, of which, even at a distance, I could not fail to receive an impression that it was familiar, and which, to say the truth, if once seen, it would have been a hard matter to forget. It was that of a very tall, thin man, arrayed in a suit of thread-bare, browny-black, the cut of which, in all its parts, gave indication that it must have been fabricated at least a quarter of a century ago. The coat was long-waisted and single-breasted, with broad skirts, huge horn buttons, and a small turn-back collar, that reached on each side to the tip of the ear. The waistcoat was likewise very long, with huge pockets, and what are called flaps, at the bottom; whilst the breeches, which barely turned the knee, and were fastened with bright silver buckles, were composed of a sort of stocking net, that literally glittered in the sun. A pair of grey worsted stockings, and stout shoes, ornamented with broad brass clasps, completed the costume of the pedestrian, who marched

stoutly along with an oaken cudgel in one hand, and a paper parcel carefully wrapped up in the other.

As the stranger walked quickly, and I was not tardy in my movements, we soon confronted one another; and I found,—not to my surprise, for I had already recognised him,—that it was no other than Mr. Davies. He had not, however, as it appeared, anticipated the meeting; for he scarcely paused to exchange the usual salutations, ere he proceeded to account for what, in the case of any person besides, would have been a very natural occurrence.

"I do not often visit Folkstone," said he; "but the truth is, poor Margery is ill, and I have been down to procure for her a few luxuries, which our meagre larder cannot furnish. You will not, I am sure, blame me if I hurry on, for there is no one at home to nurse her,—and, God bless her! she is of more value in my eyes than all the race of men besides."

So saying, he wished me good morning, and posted on.

A new trait in this singular man's character was now developed. Penurious towards himself

even in sickness, and too proud to receive as a gift what he was too parsimonious to purchase, it seemed as if he grudged no expense so long as it promised to ameliorate the sufferings of his domestic; whilst his personal attendance was as freely bestowed upon her, as it would have been upon a father or a mother. What a tissue of inconsistencies was here! The true miser may not indeed endure to spend his money, however essential to his own welfare a little expenditure may be; but if he be unwilling to do so in his own case, he is a thousand times more unwilling to do it in the case of another. The true miser, moreover, however reluctant to purchase, is usually abundantly ready to accept, no matter from what quarter the present may come, or of what nature it may be; whereas this man would have spurned a gift, let it be offered by whom it might, even at the moment when his own wants must have pressed most heavily upon him. "Yet, who knows," thought I to myself, "it may be that the same whim may actuate him here, which actuates him in his other proceedings. It is very possible that, for Margery's use, he may re-

ceive the confections, which even to propose for himself would have been treason; and if so, a door may at last be opened to confidence and intimacy between us." The more I pondered upon this idea, the more plausible it appeared; and I no sooner reached home, than I prepared to act up to it.

I was soon supplied, according to my own wish, with a shape of blanc-mange, and a cup of jelly; both of which I placed next morning in a little basket, and set out with it to Holy Cross. On reaching the well-known back-door, I knocked once or twice without receiving an answer; after which, trusting to the purity of my own motives, I lifted the latch and entered. There was a melancholy silence every where. I traversed washhouse, kitchen, and lobby, without meeting a human being or catching a sound; I looked into the parlour, but it was empty; and I advanced half-way up the stairs ere the slightest indication met me, that the house was not utterly deserted by its inmates. Then, indeed, a low and indistinct murmur, such as the wind emits when sweeping through the hollow of a rock, came

upon me; and I pressed forward with a painful conviction on my mind, that it was the voice of one in sorrow.

I soon gained the landing-place; but instead of advancing towards the chamber occupied by Davies himself, I turned to the right, whither a half-open door invited me. I looked in, and beheld a small bed-room, fitted up, not expensively indeed, but with great attention to comfort; well carpeted, well papered, and stocked with an adequate supply of every necessary piece of furniture. At the side of the bed, the curtains of which were in part drawn back, Davies was kneeling. His face, which was buried between his hands, rested on the coverlid, and he poured forth that low and plaintive moaning which had struck so coldly to my heart whilst mounting the stairs. Heaven knows, it was no impertinent or idle curiosity which compelled me to stand for several moments, a mute spectator of the scene before me; but my feelings were so powerfully wrought upon that I could not stir, had I even possessed sufficient clearness of judgment to deter-

mine whether it behoved me to retire or go forward.

I do not know whether an involuntary movement of mine, or a passing current of air, shook the chamber-door, but at the end of perhaps a couple of minutes, it creeked upon its hinges, and Davies, catching the sound, raised his head, and looked around. There were no tears upon his cheek, but the expression of his countenance was that of a man utterly forlorn; to whom Fortune had done her last injury, and who felt that there was nothing more for him to suffer. It was not, however, the sort of forlornness which despair produces; very far from it,—for there was neither wildness nor stern defiance in his glance. but a calm and holy sorrow, such as the Christian need not seek to disguise, because it brings forcibly the idea of perfect resignation along with it. Our eyes instantly met. What the language might be which mine spoke, I do not know; probably there was a good deal of confusion in it, inasmuch as I was conscious of being surprised in a situation liable to misconstruction, and but that it occurred accidentally,

scarcely to be defended. But however this might be, Davies neither by look nor gesture exhibited the faintest symptoms of indignation, or even displeasure. On the contrary, he rose without permitting a muscle to quiver, or a shade upon his pale cheek to change; and holding out his hand, begged of me to enter.

"You have come at a melancholy moment," said he with a full, unbroken, yet sorrowful voice; "but you are welcome. Poor old Margery has just paid the debt which all are doomed, sooner or later, to pay, and has not left her fellow for truth, fidelity, and strong affection, behind."

I was greatly shocked by this intelligence; so much so, indeed, that for an instant I could not command words to reply to it. It was a consummation, the possible occurrence of which I had not anticipated; and its announcement came upon me, in consequence, with the full violence of evil tidings abruptly and unexpectedly communicated. At last, I recovered so far as to express, what I really felt, my deep sorrow at the event, and to inquire into the nature of the disease which had ended thus fatally.

"The faithful creature," replied Davies, "never, I believe, recovered the fatigue of waiting upon me. I could not persuade her to go to bed for a single night during my protracted illness; and the want of natural rest is a privation not easily to be borne by a young, far less by an old person. She held up, indeed, for a short space after I was able to go about again, though even then it was easy to perceive that her feeble frame had overworked itself; but on the evening of the very day when you last did me the favour to call, Margery yielded to her malady, which has gradually, but surely, gained upon her ever since. Well, it was the will of Heaven that the kind creature should not live to see her fondest vision realized,—and to that will she submitted as she ought."

I now cast a glance towards the bed, upon which lay the still warm corpse of the housekeeper. There was a mild and placid expression in the countenance, seeming to imply, that the last thought which animated the senseless clay, had been a happy one; and whilst the eyes were closed, the lips were slightly

parted, as if the spirit had passed from them in prayer. I observed, likewise, that no comfort, which it was within the reach of money to purchase, or affection to bestow, had been denied to her. She reclined upon a soft down bed, the entire furniture of which was composed of the finest materials. Beside her stood a table, on which were arranged every imaginable species of innocent luxury, calculated to stimulate the appetite, or please the fancy of an invalid, whilst a number of phials and boxes furnished abundant evidence, that nothing which medical skill could suggest for her recovery, had been withheld. Yet all availed not,—and he who had recently struggled through a serious indisposition, destitute of those accommodations which he freely afforded to a menial, saw that menial perish in spite of all his efforts to save her.

Little conversation, besides what has been detailed above, passed between Davies and myself on the present occasion. It was no fit time for inquiring farther into the state of his affairs, than he himself chose voluntarily to explain; and I returned home as ig-

norant as I was when I set out, touching the nature of the tie which bound him and his aged domestic so closely together. But the frank and open manner in which he had met me, even at a moment of acute suffering, induced me to nourish a hope, that matters might ultimately assume a different character; and the events of every successive day gave to that anticipation an increased degree of plausibility.

I visited Davies, as well from a sense of duty as from inclination, repeatedly, during the interval which elapsed between the death and burial of Margery; and I found him on all occasions pleased and gratified at my coming. He did not hesitate to tell me, that in losing his housekeeper, he had lost the only human being in whose happiness he was really interested; yet he never gave way to any unmanly lamentations, far less uttered a syllable of repining or complaint. On the contrary, he made the necessary preparations for her funeral, with the same calmness that he would have exhibited, had she been to him no more than an ordinary servant; and whilst he

desired that every thing should be done with decency, he took care that there was no unnecessary waste. Finally, on the Sunday succeeding her decease, the body of the Welshwoman was committed to the earth, Davies following as chief mourner, and I reading the funeral-service.

Margery died in the month of April; and from that date, up to the Michaelmas following, Davies continued to spend his time after the same fashion which he followed whilst she was alive. He hired no other permanent domestic, it is true; that is to say, he took none into his family, nor, except to wash his linen, did he make use of the regular services of any one; but an old woman came occasionally, perhaps twice or thrice a week, to make his bed, and to sweep out the dust which might have accumulated both in his parlour and chamber. As to his food, of whatever materials composed, he cooked it entirely himself; and his shoes when cleaned, as well as his clothes when brushed at all, were brushed and cleaned with his own hands. In one respect, however, his habits did undergo a change. To my great

satisfaction, not less than to my surprise, he strolled over frequently to St. Alphage; and whatever anxious thoughts might oppress him when he arrived, they never failed to disperse under the influence of friendly conversation. Yet, strange to say, though taking undisguised delight in the society of my family, I could never prevail upon him to eat or drink amongst us. Not only did he steadily refuse my invitation to join us at our meals; but even the casual refreshment of a crust of bread, or a glass of wine, he rejected; indeed, the production of the one or the other, nay, the very intimation that it was about to be produced, always caused him to quit the house. For a time, we did our best to overcome these eccentricities; but finding that we were not likely to succeed, and that a too steady perseverance in the attempt would probably drive him from us altogether, we latterly permitted him to indulge his own inclinations.

In this manner things went on till the day before Michaelmas-day; the oddities of man, by being brought continually before us, ceasing in a great degree to excite wonder; when a revo-

lution in his affairs took place, certainly as little looked for on our parts, as a change in the great and fundamental laws by which visible nature is governed. He had intermitted his calls for about a week, and a casual indisposition keeping me at home, I had not been able to seek him in his own dwelling; when, as we sat round the fire in the dusk of the evening, the parlour door was thrown open, and the servant announced in an audible voice, Mr. Davies. I rose to bid him welcome; but on casting my eyes round, they fell upon an object which completely riveted me to the spot. Davies undeniably stood before me, with a pleased yet a sickly smile on his lips,—but so thoroughly changed, in respect to dress, air, and appearances, that I could with difficulty bring myself to believe that it was he. The suit of old-fashioned rusty black was thrown aside, and its place supplied by one made after the most approved modern cut, perfectly new, and of the finest materials. The dingy shovel-hat had given way to a handsome beaver; and the thick brass-buckled brogues, and grey worsted stockings, were supplanted by silken hose, and shoes

such as might be worn in any drawing-room. It will not be wondered at, if I hesitated whether to believe the evidence of my own senses, and that I hung back with the awkward stare of a man who knows not how to act. But Davies made haste to relieve me from the unpleasant predicament in which I stood. Advancing into the middle of the room, with an easy gait, he grasped my passive hand, and, after cordially shaking it, said,—

"I am by no means surprised that you should doubt the reality of the vision brought thus abruptly before you. You have hitherto seen in me, only the miserable Miser, who set the opinions of the world at defiance, and pursued his own sordid course through evil report and through good. I cannot blame you for hesitating to believe that I could ever appear in a different character. The time, however, has come, when I am enabled to explain to you the mystery of my conduct. I thank God, that the object of an entire life is attained; and I will now, with your permission, give you the history of myself, were it only to justify you in your own eyes for having, at our first acquaintance,

ventured to express an opinion, to the truth of which outward appearances, at least, afforded no support.

There was no lack of willingness on our parts, as may easily be imagined, to become listeners to a tale which we had long and ardently desired to hear. After expressing, therefore, with perfect sincerity, our lively satisfaction that any piece of good fortune should have befallen him, we gathered round him in a circle, whilst he proceeded in the following terms.—

## CHAPTER III.

"I NEED not inform you that I am a native of Wales, for to that my accent, doubtless, bears testimony; and poor Margery has, I believe, already led you to gather, that I first saw the light in Denbighshire. The case is so. I am the son of a gentleman who once owned a property of no great money value perhaps, but of considerable extent, in that county; which descended to him in lineal succession from times long anterior to the Conquest, and was held by the surest and best of all tenures, —that of prescription and the sword. I was born in the House of Llanrwst: I spent the first fifteen years of my life in wandering over its bare hills, fishing in its rapid rivers, following the roe among its woods, and shooting the black-cock

over its moors; and it will not therefore surprise you to be told, that the compass of the round world contains not a spot so dear to my imagination.

"The family of which I am now the representative, has, from the remotest periods, been remarkable for the rashness and head-strong improvidence of its chiefs. In ancient times, no feud or warlike movement occurred, in which a Davies failed, sooner or later, to take part; and in times more recent, they contrived, with singular ingenuity, to be involved in every sedition or rebellion which has agitated our country.

"As evil fortune would have it, too, my ancestors invariably happened to espouse the losing side in all their enterprises. They were staunch Cavaliers in the days of the Commonwealth, and suffered, like others of the same party, from the rapacious exactions of the Roundheads. At the Revolution, they refused to transfer their allegiance to the new dynasty, and fought, and bled, and endured other pains of unsuccessful rebellion. My great-grandfather held a command in James's army in Ireland; the army was defeated, and he himself narrowly escaped

being hanged; whilst, by order of Government, his house was burned down, his cattle driven off, and his lands laid waste. Unawed by the fate of his predecessor, my grandfather no sooner heard of Charles Edward's advance into England, than he went off, with a few followers, to join him. He, too, was in hiding for many months; and though his life was eventually spared, the estate was confiscated. But better times came. The Government felt itself sufficiently strong to act with clemency to its opponents; and Llanrwst, restored to its legitimate owner, came down, in due course, though grievously encumbered, to my father.

"The consequence of these numerous accidents was, in a pecuniary point of view, exceedingly distressing. Never possessed of much ready cash, our family now found themselves under the cruel necessity of mortgaging a portion of the estate to enable them to retake possession of the remainder; and the building of a new house, on a scale far more costly than needed to have been adopted, plunged us deeper and deeper into difficulties. To rescue himself from them, my father, who possessed no talent

for business, put himself into the hands of an agent, and became, like many other Welsh landholders, a dealer, on a large scale, in cattle. But this expedient proved as little beneficial in the end as the warlike operations of his ancestors. The man who conducted the details of business for him grew rich, and purchased an estate; whilst my poor father was reduced, if not to real, at all events, to nominal bankruptcy.

"In the mean while, with the improvidence which he inherited from the founder of his race, the good man thought fit to marry. His choice was perfectly unobjectionable in most respects, for he united himself to a very amiable and a very beautiful woman, whose blood was as pure as that of any stock in the principality, and whose principles were not less pure than her blood; but unfortunately, she was the seventh daughter of a poor country-gentleman, and possessed not a shilling. Still they were exceedingly happy in each other's society for some years after their marriage, during which she brought him three sons, of whom I was the youngest; indeed, as long as he could drive off, by temporary expedients, a

threatened calamity, no matter how grievous, my father was not a man to permit care to feed upon his vitals. But the canker, though carefully concealed from others, and, as far as might be, from the eyes of the patient himself, was by this time too deep-seated ever to undergo a cure. The creditors finding that neither principal nor interest was forthcoming, talked of instituting legal proceedings, and it became but too apparent, that the estate of Llanrwst must before long be advertised for sale.

"It was on a beautiful evening in June, when the leaves were in full leaf, and nature wore on flood and field her gayest livery, that two men, mounted on indifferent ponies, and shabbily dressed in drab riding-coats, were seen slowly winding up the avenue and approaching the place. You must know that the house stands at the base of a tall green hill, exquisitely studded with hazel and birch-trees to the summit, which falling back, as it were, in the centre, constitutes of itself three sides of a magnificent amphitheatre. The fourth side is more level, stretching down in a rich meadow towards the Clwyd, which winds and chafes through one of the most glo-

rious and fertile valleys of which the kingdom of England can boast. Through this meadow ran the avenue, formed by a double row of beeches, and extending perhaps a quarter of a mile from Llanrwst to the high road. Now it was no unusual sight to witness the approach of absolute strangers in this direction, because the Vale of Clwyd is much visited by tourists, and my father's door was never closed against the traveller who chose to claim his hospitality. No one, therefore, would have viewed the advance even of these men with distrust, notwithstanding that their demeanour bespoke them to belong to a class little given to travel for mere amusement; but certain events had happened a week or two previously, which agitated the family not a little, and the strangers were regarded as not unconnected with them. In plain language, one creditor, more importunate than the rest, had announced to my father by letter, that unless his demand were settled against a certain day, a warrant would be issued; and the day having long gone by, it was shrewdly enough suspected, that the strangers could be no other than sheriff's officers.

" I was at this time within a few months of completing my sixteenth year, and my brothers were, the eldest by three years, the younger, by a year and a half, my seniors. We were not ignorant that my father's affairs were embarrassed; indeed it would have been a hard task to conceal that fact from any member of the family; but till he spoke out now in the bitterness of alarm, we had not entertained a suspicion that the evil had gone so far. Our feelings on the occasion may be imagined, but they cannot possibly be described.

" 'Arrest you, my father!' we exclaimed in a breath. 'Who will dare to arrest you in your own house, surrounded by your own servants, and with your sons here to protect you? By Heavens, if the scoundrels lay but a finger upon you, or speak one insolent word to you or our mother, they shall sleep more soundly to-night than they bargained for; but it will be in the bed of the Clwyd.'

" We ran out ere my father had time to answer, and the alarm spreading to the servants' hall, and from thence to the outhouses, in five minutes' time there were a dozen men armed with

guns, pitchforks, and scythes, ready to defend the approaches against any numbers. It was to no purpose that my father entreated us to hear reason, and pointed out the absolute madness of attempting to resist the execution of a legal process. We could see no madness in the matter; and hence, whilst he betook himself to the woods, in imitation of his more warlike ancestors, we deliberately drew up our band at the head of the avenue in battle-array. Leaving the people there under the command of the gardener, my brothers and I went forward, for the purpose of ascertaining the cause of an intrusion which we were prepared at all events to resent.

"The strangers had not been inattentive observers of our movements; and they now halted about half-way between the house and the high-road, as if irresolute how to act. They did not, however, retire, but waited our approach; and in answer to our question, put in no very courteous terms, they replied by stating the simple truth as it was. 'They were extremely sorry; it was a very unpleasant business,

quite as disagreeable to them as it could be to us; but they were not to blame, and hoped that we would not interrupt or misuse them in the execution of their duty.'—'We have a warrant,' continued one of them.

"'A warrant!' exclaimed my brother, 'and against whom?'

"'Against Morgan Davies, Esq. for debt, at the suit of Messrs. Clutchem and Holdit, attorneys-at-law, Chester, to the execution of which we trust that no opposition will be made, as a peaceable course will be best for all parties.'

"'I give you five minutes to consider,' replied my brother, deliberately pulling out his watch, 'whether you will withdraw in sound skins, and carry back to your cheating employers a message of defiance, or be content to dangle by the neck upon that tree, or be rolled over the rock into the pool below. Your cursed warrants are of no value here, and you may say so to those who signed them.'

"'I beg you to consider, young gentleman,' replied the individual who spoke before, 'that the style in which you are talking is a very

dangerous one. The law is not now to be resisted with impunity; and if you compel us to go back without our prisoner, you may shortly receive a visit from those who will be likely to carry you all in a heap, where your quarters won't be to your liking.'

" 'Do you bandy words with me, caitiff?' exclaimed my brother, furious with rage, at the same time making a grasp at the officer's bridle. This was the signal for our support to advance: they rushed forward, yelling like so many mountain-cats; but the officers, with great judgment, declined to abide the result. Snatching his reins hastily upwards, the spokesman contrived to elude his assailant's gripe, at the same moment that he wheeled his pony round upon its haunches; and his companion following the example, they set off at full speed down the avenue. Though we had thus repulsed them, we retained sufficiently the use of our reason to know, that any farther act of violence could not fail to bring about the worst consequences; so we contented ourselves, after discharging a volley of stones, to follow them with hooting and laughter as far as the gate; and leaving one

to watch there against their return, we retraced our steps triumphantly to the hall.

" So far we were doubtless victorious ; but my father, who was keenly alive to the results likely to ensue, by no means participated in our triumph. ' You have done more towards effecting the ruin of your house,' said he in an agony of grief and despair, ' than any one since the forty-five could have done. I will go instantly to Chester, give myself up into the hands of Clutchem and Holdit, and endeavour, if I can, to avert some of the consequences of your rashness; but the very least that can happen, will be a heavy fine, the payment of which will leave us no alternative but to sell the lands.' It was in vain that we strove to reason him out of this determination. He set out next morning, accompanied by my two brothers, to throw himself on the mercy of men who knew not the meaning of the word ; and he never revisited the house of his fathers again.

" Ten days might have elapsed, after the occurrence of these adventures, when a body of dragoons, headed by three men in ordinary

dresses, arrived at Llanrwst. To have attempted opposition to such a force, would, under any circumstances, have been madness; and those were absent whose fiery spirits and strong arms rendered them best qualified to take the lead in scenes of peril. My mother, therefore, issued positive orders, that no hostile movement should be made; and the troopers, who marched with great caution, sending out their scouts before them, and otherwise feeling their way, gained the lawn without an effort being made to arrest or impede them. Even now, however, either for ostentation-sake, or because resistance was still apprehended, they carried on their approaches in warlike fashion. The three civilians, with five dragoons dismounted, two others riding round, at the same time, to the back of the house, and, while the remaining three took charge of the horses, the first mentioned body marched with carabines loaded and primed towards the door. It was not even closed against them; upon which a sentinel halting to keep up the communication, the other seven moved briskly into the hall.

"All these evolutions took place under the

eyes both of my mother and myself, who watched them with feelings equally strong, perhaps, but somewhat different in kind. As to my poor mother, fear was with her the predominant passion,—fear lest insult or injury should be offered to herself and her son, mixed with a vague apprehension of evil already wrought to her absent kindred. For myself, indignation and rage were the only sentiments of which I have now any recollection; and the dis play of these was not checked without a violent struggle. But when I looked to my mother, and saw her pale and breathless—when I felt her lean upon me for support, and heard her beseech me, as I valued her peace, not to notice, even by an angry word, any insolence on the part of these intruders, I determined to master my passion; and, desperate as the effort was, I succeeded. We sat down side by side in the drawing-room, and awaited in silence the course which events should take.

"We had not waited in this position many moments, when, the door being cautiously opened, first a trooper, and then the identical officer who had acted a principal part on a former

occasion, entered. They were followed, on a given signal, by the rest; and the man of law, advancing into the middle of the room, addressed himself, in a tone half-supercilious, half-soothing, to my mother—

"'Very sorry, Ma'am, extremely sorry indeed, to be obliged to adopt these measures; but the fault is entirely your own. I said when I was here last that no good would come of resistance; and what has been the consequence? There are Mr. Davies and his sons in limbo, on a charge of deforcement and violence; and the least that can happen to them will be transportation for fourteen years. But they would not take a plain man's advice, and now they are reaping the fruits of their own rashness. Do you think these are times when a Welsh landowner can put arms into his people's hands, and defy the law? No, no—we don't live in the days of blades and bucklers; and that they will learn to their cost.'

"'My good friend,' replied I—for my mother was too violently affected to speak—'I trust that what you have just said is not true; but, whether true or otherwise, it would have

been more consistent with humanity had you concealed it, in our present circumstances. There is no manhood in wounding the feelings of a lady, already, as you may perceive, ill able to bear up against the evils that surround her. Tell me, however, as the representative of my father in his absence, by what authority all this is done, and why our house is taken possession of by soldiers, as if it were an enemy's castle?'

"'Unless my memory fail me,' replied the officer, 'you too, young gentleman, were engaged in opposing the execution of justice. However, I don't want to be hard upon you; and as we have three safe who are older, and ought therefore to have been wiser, we will not send you after them,—at least immediately. As to my authority, it is easily given. I am here by virtue of a decree of Court, which has condemned Morgan Davies, Esq. to the payment of a fine of five hundred pounds, in default of which his goods and chattels are seized in the King's name; and these soldiers are assisting in the execution of the writ, because I know, from experience, that any other

authority is scarce likely to be regarded.—Does this satisfy you?' showing his warrant at the same time. 'And now, Madam,' continued he, turning to my mother, 'it only remains for me to declare the plate, furniture, books, apparel, and other chattels in this house, arrested,—and to inform you, that though we will not turn you out of doors, we must quarter ourselves upon you till an inventory of the effects to be sold at the suit of the Crown be taken. We have ridden some distance this morning; and men and horses stand in need of refreshment.'

"'That will be seen to,' replied my mother, commanding in some degree her feelings; 'but surely you cannot mean, that Mr. Morgan and my sons are under sentence of transportation. He took no part in the violence of which you complain, and they, young and inexperienced, acted under the impulse of a momentary delusion, from which they are long ago recovered. They would not visit so slight an offence with so grievous a penalty.'

"'Why, no, Ma'am, no,' said the officer, 'I don't mean that they would be banished, only

that they deserved banishment,—that's all. The thing, you see, is settled; and it is to pay the fine imposed in consequence of that violence, that we are here.—But I have other warrants besides; a distress from Grasper and Swindel, to the amount of 600*l.*; a foreclosed mortgage held by Hugh Wrench, value 3400*l.*; a——but I need not go over the whole. The truth is, Ma'am, I'm very sorry, but I must say it,—the truth is, this house is no longer yours. We won't drive you out to-night, for it gets late; and God forbid I should distress any one, notwithstanding your people used me but scurvily a few days ago; but to-morrow morning you must be moving. There is no alternative, and we must do our duty.'

"'Nay, mother,' said I, 'let us not stay a moment. I will help you to put up a few articles of dress, and we will go at once, were it to sleep in the fields.'

"'There is no occasion for going, you see, in such a hurry,' interrupted the officer. 'I tell you, you may stay here till to-morrow; but as to putting up any thing, that is quite out of the

question. Not a stick nor a rag can be removed from this house, till the King's demands, and Grasper's distress, be satisfied.'

"'You would not surely deny us the privilege of securing a change of habiliments?'

"'I can't allow it on no account; I must do my duty.'

"'Come then, Llewellin,' said my mother to me, rising as she spoke, 'this is no longer our home; let us quit it, and find shelter for our heads where we can.'

"'Sure now!' said one of the troopers, 'you won't suffer that, Master Sleek, no how! You can't allow the poor creatures to go away without any thing to cover them but the clothes they wear?"

"'B—t them!' replied the officer, who could no longer keep up the farce of acting with civility. 'If I were to tie them neck and crop and lodge them in the cellar, it would be no more than they deserve. They talk of hanging up honest men in the execution of their duty! Things have come to a pretty pass, when a set of beggarly Welsh runts use threats to their betters, and deforce the persons of King's officers. Let

them go and be d——d, or stay and be d——d, —all's one to me; only they take nothing with them, as sure as my name is Dick Sleck."

"The tone of the fellow's voice, not less than the violence of his manner, increased my mother's anxiety to escape from a place where she no longer considered herself, or me, secure from personal violence. She accordingly hurried towards the door, and dragging me after her, ran, rather than walked, forth into the air. No opposition was made to this movement, for the voice of Sleek calling angrily to let the —— pass, was warranty enough to the soldiers not to interrupt our progress. But we had proceeded only a little way on our road, ere a spectacle presented itself, more gratifying, perhaps, than satisfactory, under existing circumstances. About fifty able-bodied men, armed with such weapons as chance brought first to hand, appeared advancing with quick steps towards the house. They were headed by Margery,—the same affectionate creature whom we so lately followed to the grave; and they seemed animated with the same resolution of delivering their lady and young master from thraldom,

or perishing in the attempt. Alas! it was a useless, and not altogether a safe display of the attachment which did exist, and which I am willing to believe still exists, among the mountains,—between tenants and their landlord. It could have availed us nothing, under any circumstances; and now, was not without the hazard of involving us in still greater difficulties. Happily, however, the men, though violently excited, were not deaf to the voice of reason. They saw that we were safe—so far the first object was attained; and as we assured them that any act of hostility committed by them towards the King's troops, would be visited upon the head of my father, they consented, though not without reluctance, to disperse. They did so, before the troopers, who had mounted and formed, were in a condition to act; and satisfied that all risk of a tumult was over, we readily accepted Margery's invitation, and accompanied her home."

# CHAPTER IV.

## THE MISER.

"THOUGH I have related my own history up to the sixteenth year of my life, I have as yet given you no farther intimation of the existence of poor Margery, than by mentioning her in the terms made use of a few moments ago. I am much to blame in having so done: for if ever there existed a human being devoted to the interests of others, and careless of her own, Margery Jones was that person. The truth indeed is, that Margery's ancestors had held a small farm under mine, from time immemorial. Each succeeding generation was accordingly in the habit of looking up to the proprietors of Llanrwst as their natural protectors; and long after the influence of feudal tenures ceased to be acknowledged, custom,—perhaps a nobler

principle,—maintained an ascendency over them. Margery herself, however, acknowledged claims even more sacred than these. It chanced that she was delivered of a child much about the same time with my mother, and being an exceedingly healthy, and then a good-looking woman, she was honoured by being chosen as my nurse. She did her duty by me rigidly, and losing her own baby soon after I was removed to her cabin, she became as warmly attached to me, as if I had been bone of her bone, and flesh of her flesh.

"Margery's husband was one of those rough and lawless characters that are to be found in all parts of the world,—a determined poacher, not over-scrupulous in drawing distinctions between mine and thine, and withal totally disinclined to earn for himself a livelihood by honest industry. If he was brought once before the bench of magistrates, under accusation of various crimes, the thing occurred at least a hundred times; and though my father, out of regard for his wife, took his part repeatedly, a case was, in the end, brought so home to him, that there was no resisting it. He was sent to

the county-gaol, tried for sheep-stealing, and escaped death by the hands of the executioner, only to suffer transportation for life. But though her husband was thus dealt with, and richly merited his fate, honest Margery was by no means neglected by our people; on the contrary, she was promoted to the office of principal superintendent of the poultry-yard, was lodged in a snug cottage scarce a stone's throw from the domain, and became to all intents and purposes a member of the household. The kind creature's gratitude knew no bounds; and as she had never borne but one child, which died as I have stated, she transferred the whole of her affections, which were neither transient nor light, to the kindred of her benefactor.

" It is scarcely necessary to say, that having spent the first two years of my life chiefly under Margery's superintendence, my affection for her was hardly less lively than hers for me. She was to me, during the whole of my boyhood, a sort of second mother; only that she never dreamed of thwarting me in any inclination, no matter how extravagant or improper. Did I

covet any thing which was denied me at home, I had only to tell Margery of the circumstance, and if the treasure were to be procured by any exertion of hers, I seldom sighed in vain. In a word, the highest of all duties, in that kind soul's estimation, was to advance the happiness of her child, and to attain that she would have esteemed the sacrifice of life itself as a thing not to be spoken about.

"As long as affairs went smoothly with us, it would have been strange indeed had Margery failed to share our prosperity. When the horizon began to blacken, none was longer in seeing the storm as it collected, nor more sincere in lamenting its occurrence. A rumour no sooner got abroad that her master was likely to be arrested, than she gave up every thought to the devising of plans for the prevention of so great a calamity, and reasoning about present times from the tales which were familiar to her of times of old, she considered no method more likely to bring about the attainment of her wishes, than to call in the aid of the tenants at large. For this purpose, she went over the lands, unknown to us, inciting the yeomanry to stand by their

Chief against the enemies which threatened him. She appealed to them as men, whose ancestors had, for ages, experienced the paternal care of the lords of Llanrwst; and such was the wild energy of her manner, that she stirred them up to something like her own enthusiasm. Hence the facility with which the band was brought together, who, but for our opportune meeting, would have infallibly come to blows with the dragoons, and whom we found it no easy matter to draw off from risking a skirmish, for the purpose of driving the Saxons, as they termed them, from the hall of their own master.

"The evening was somewhat advanced ere our unwelcome guests came upon us; consequently the shades of night were closing round us when we reached the abode of Margery. It was a poor hovel, containing but two apartments, both of them upon the ground-floor; but, poor as it was, it offered a shelter to heads otherwise houseless, and we availed ourselves of it thankfully. Besides, it was at all times remarkably clean. True, the floors were mud, and the bedsteads a couple of boxes fixed in the wall; but then the earth was always well strewed with

fresh rushes, and the bedding, if coarse, was pure as the spirit of cleanliness could make it. Moreover, Margery was the kindest and most attentive of hostesses. Lamenting sometimes the evil fortune which had reduced us to seek a night's lodging from her,—at other times pouring forth curses upon our persecutors, and for the most part summing up with the utterance of rude expressions of the great honour done to her cottage by such a presence, she bustled about with the greatest avidity, and set before us, in a shorter space of time than could have been calculated upon, a wholesome supper of eggs, goats' milk, cheese, barley-bread, and butter fresh from the churn. The whole was arranged upon a cloth which would have done no discredit, either in fineness of texture or purity of colour, to the mansion of a noble, though it was the produce of her own tangling, spinning, bleaching, and all, except weaving.

"'Now, you will eat a little bit, my Lady,' said she, 'were it only to please poor Margery, and to keep up your heart after all that has happened this black day; and proud shall I be when the Squire returns, and all is right again,

to think, that my Lady and my own darling young master, spent one evening not uncomfortably under the roof that they gave me.'

"But Margery's expostulations, though repeated over and over again, failed in producing the desired effect with my mother. She was sick at heart; and such a sickness as that admits of no other disposition holding with it a divided sovereignty. For myself, however, I was as yet too young to perceive the full extent of the calamity under which my house had fallen, and I freely and even cheerfully partook of the meal which my kind nurse had provided. I slept soundly too, in one of the snug boxes of which notice has already been taken; whilst my poor mother scarcely lay down, and never closed an eye upon the other.

"When the morrow came, it unavoidably brought with it the necessity of determining upon a question which had as yet been considered very vaguely—Whither were we to go? To remain where we were, could serve no good purpose; for our house was taken possession of, and its contents would shortly be sold off; whilst to abide with Margery till intelligence

could be received from my father, was an arrangement not to be thought of. Besides, what had become of my father, and whence was it, that though absent almost an entire fortnight, he had sent us no account either of his proceedings or prospects? Then again, to go in quest of him in a large town, with none of whose inmates we had even a slight acquaintance, appeared an undertaking too hazardous to be risked by a delicate woman and inexperienced boy. Nor was this all: our funds were at the lowest ebb; my father having taken along with him almost the whole of the little money which chanced to be in the house; and though we found it practicable enough to exist in the Vale of Clwyd upon credit, we were well aware that the same resource would not avail us in Chester. My mother wept bitterly as these melancholy reflections crowded upon her; and I and Margery wept too,—perhaps from a conviction that there was too much reason for her distress; but more decidedly, because we saw that she was unhappy.

" 'Don't weep, my dear lady,' said Margery,

sobbing audibly all the while;—'It's no use taking on; and sorrow only unfits us for exertion. What matters the evil of to-day! Isn't to-morrow coming, and don't we read, that heaviness may last for a night, but joy cometh in the morning?'

"'Ah Margery!' replied my mother, 'upon us no such morning will ever dawn; there is an end for ever to the House of Llanrwst; but——'

"'Now, Heaven forbid it, my Lady!' exclaimed Margery, drying up her tears, 'and let no one utter before me so dark a prophecy.—An end to the House of Llanrwst!—No! while these hands can labour, no child of that house shall lack a servant; and as long as the servant is true, the lord cannot entirely fall. Darkness may be over you now, my Lady, but it must depart; and here,' placing her hand upon my shoulder, 'is he, that will yet bring back the House of Llanrwst to its ancient splendour. I may not live to see it, but sure I am, that my own darling will sleep again in peaceable possession of the home of his fathers.

"'These are glowing visions of yours, Mar-

gery,' replied my mother, smiling through her tears, 'and not unworthy of the days when old nurses spoke in parables, and grey-haired bards possessed the faculty of foretelling events to come; but this is not a moment to be wasted in looking so far before us. The matter at present to be decided is,—what steps shall I and Llewellin take? I would proceed instantly in quest of Mr. Davies, but that, to say truth, I have not the means; and where to raise funds for the journey I know not.'

"'And shall it be said, that the Lady of Llanrwst wanted for money, whilst a tenant upon the Squire's lands possessed a shilling? —No!' She hurried out of the house as she spoke, and, for a full hour and a half, my mother and I were left to enjoy each other's conversation.

"I retain no distinct recollection of what passed between us during the temporary absence of our hostess. I remember, indeed, that my mother was absorbed with grief, and that I used my best efforts to cheer and support her; but I remember still more vividly, that the appearance of Margery hurrying up the glen

on her return, was, especially to me, no slight relief. In a few moments she entered the room where we sat, and laying a leathern bag upon the table, exclaimed, with a smile upon her countenance,—

"'Now, my Lady, look there! See what your own people have sent; and if there be not enough there to pay off all scores at once, and put you in quiet possession again of the Place, there is more than sufficient to carry you to Chester, and support you there like a princess, till better times come.'

"So saying, she tore open the mouth of the purse, shed out its contents with a trembling hand, and the surface of the table was covered in a trice with a display of all the coins of the realm. Margery was not satisfied with this; she piled them up according to their order, the few guineas that were, apart from the silver, and the silver apart from the copper, and in the end pronounced, with a voice of marked triumph, 'that there were full three-and-twenty pounds, nine shillings, and seven pence, at her Lady's control.' In spite of her grief, my mother could not suppress a smile at the enthusiastic

simplicity of Margery; whilst I, whose sorrows sat more lightly, laughed aloud. Honest Margery, mistaking the cause of our mirth, joined heartily in it; and thus, for a few moments, the house of mourning was literally changed into that of merriment.

" 'I didn't go round half of them,' exclaimed the simple creature; 'I hadn't time to see any except those nearest at hand,—and yet you see what I have collected already. What will it be when the others know that the Lady stands in need of help to recover her own?'

" 'But you know the exact amount that you have received from each, I hope,' said my mother, 'as well as the names of all that have come thus generously forward?'

" 'That I do: it is but justice to repeat them, that when the Squire comes to his own again, he may repay one good office by another.'

" Margery here recapitulated the names of the few tenants on whom she had called, every one of whom cheerfully handed over to her the sum total of his ready cash; and you need scarcely be told, that the memorandum then made was neither lost nor destroyed.

"I do not know whether to say, that this mode of obtaining a supply adequate to the expenses before us, was gratifying to the feelings of my mother and myself, or the reverse. In one point of view, it was abundantly humiliating to accept of pecuniary accommodation of our inferiors and dependents; in another, the readiness with which they came forward in an hour of need, went farther to satisfy us of our popularity, than a thousand protestations of respect and affection, poured forth during the sunshine of good fortune. To whichever side the balance leaned, however, one thing is very certain,—that we were at once too poor, and our case too pressing, to permit of a moment's hesitation as to the acceptance of the contribution. It was received thankfully as a loan; and Margery being again sent out in quest of a vehicle to transport us, we made ready to set out, immediately on her return, for Chester. She was not many minutes absent on this occasion. A sort of covered car, drawn by a single horse, being procured, we shook the kind creature warmly by the hand; but no reasoning of ours would induce her to stay behind. 'No, she had vowed

to go with her young master over the world, and nothing but force should hinder her from keeping her word.' There was no resisting an argument thus urged; so Margery, after giving up the key of her house to the friendly owner of the car, who insisted upon doing the duty of driver in person, mounted after us, and we began our journey, thus strangely attended, towards the low country.

"No circumstance worthy of repetition occurred during the progress of this journey. On the part of my mother, it was a melancholy one; for besides that her apprehensions for the safety of those most dear to her were excessive, she guessed with too much reason, that she had turned her back upon the Vale of Clwyd for ever: on my part, hope, the love of change, and the anticipation of seeing again in a short time my father and brothers, in a great degree counterbalanced feelings of a more gloomy nature. Margery, likewise, appeared but little disposed to give way without a struggle to evil forebodings. With a freedom that exists not among English servants, but which in no instance passed the line of rigid respect, she exerted herself to chase away the

dark thoughts which oppressed the mind of her mistress; and, rude as her system of condolence was, it failed not to produce an effect.

"The second day was considerably advanced, when, after crossing the Dee at the bridge of Alford, Chester, with its commanding fortallice and antique ramparts, lay before us. It was now that my mother, apparently for the first time, began to consider, with the attention which they deserved, the real difficulties of her situation. Though not unacquainted with the localities of the city, which she had frequently visited, as well previous to her marriage as since, she was nevertheless somewhat at a loss where to establish herself; for it was not her intention to appear, in her reduced circumstances, among the friends of her earlier life, and of the meaner places of accommodation she knew nothing. Then, again, there were considerable doubts as to the means of discovering my father. It was true that the villainous tipstaff had pretty plainly insinuated, that both he and his sons were inmates of a prison; but there was something too horrible in that idea to be admitted, and, almost against conviction, she held out

stoutly against it. Happily for her, the worthy man who drove our car had been in the habit of dealing largely in the palatine capital, and thence was familiarly acquainted with more than one hostelry adapted to the state of our finances; and to his guidance our treatment, at all events for the night, was in consequence committed.

"Our postilion conducted us to a poor-looking inn, in a narrow lane in the suburbs, before the door of which we alighted. The mean appearance of the place caused my mother involuntarily to shudder, for it forced upon her, in broader outline than ever, the true picture of her condition; and though the people were abundantly civil, and the little parlour into which we were ushered was not devoid of a certain air of snugness and comfort, the door was scarcely closed, when she threw herself down in an arm-chair, and wept bitterly. But the paroxysm soon passing away, she wound up her courage to the sticking-place; and having given directions that beds should be got ready, and Margery and our friendly postilion duly attended to, she drew her veil closely about her

face, and putting her arm within mine, we walked abroad together.

"In spite of the afflicting circumstances under which my first visit to the ancient city was paid, it would have been unnatural had the strange aspect of every thing within its circuit failed to strike me with wonder and amazement. The curious construction of the houses, with their projecting balconies and covering walls; the principal streets sunk so far beneath the level of the surrounding country, that to reach them it was necessary to descend a flight of steps; the pavé raised high above the lane, along which carriages were rolling; and the shops in a great degree hidden by their position from the foot-passengers,—all these peculiarities operated with more than common force upon the imagination of one who had never till now beheld a place of greater importance than Denbigh. Then again, when I looked up, I saw that no rain could reach us; for the galleries from either side stretched so far across, that a person standing in one might, with perfect ease, shake hands with his friend standing in the other; whilst the crowds of people that met us were viewed

with the greater wonder, because, ere we descended to the level of the promenade, not a human being could be seen.

"We traversed the principal street unnoticed, at least unrecognised by any one, and ascending the eminence on which the castle stands, approached its fortified entrance. The sentinel stopped us on the drawbridge, to demand our business, and would have had us insert our names in a book kept for the purpose; but on my explaining to the officer that we were not desirous of going over the works, and that our object was to visit a prisoner, he at once dispensed with a custom which, in our case, could not have been followed without pain. He kindly invited us, moreover, to sit down in his little guard-room, whilst a man went forward to ascertain whether my father were indeed in confinement; and the messenger returning soon afterwards with an announcement that the case was so, he received instructions to conduct us to the prison.

"I pass by the particulars of the first interview between relatives separated under circumstances so painful and thus painfully reuni-

ted. We found the prisoners inhabiting a suite of two small apartments, which they hired from the gaoler at an exorbitant rent, and worn down in health and spirits, not more from confinement than from mental disquiet. The pride of my brothers in particular had been grievously wounded, and, like young eagles shut up in a cage, they pined for the free range of earth and air, to which they had from childhood been accustomed; whilst my father, irritable at all times, fretted both himself and them by continual upbraidings. I need not say, that the embraces which passed from one to the other, were given with an intensity of bitterness, which spoke a language far more intelligible than words; and that when the turnkey broke in to remind us, that the hour of locking up was at hand, we found that not half that each had designed to say, was said. My mother would have remained with the prisoners all night, but that my father positively prohibited the measure. We accordingly bade them good-night, and, returning to our little inn, passed the remainder of the evening, in a frame of mind upon which it is humiliating even now to look back.

"Our first business on the following day, was to look out for a private lodging at once conveniently situated for visiting the gaol, and moderate in its rent. We were fortunate enough to find one, not indeed remarkable for its elegance, but sufficiently comfortable; and having little to remove in the shape of baggage or effects, we passed into it immediately. Here it was that Margery began that career of faithful and gratuitous service, which ended only with her life. She cooked for us, waited upon us, washed our linen, and otherwise attended to our wants, not merely with cheerfulness, but with alacrity; and the heavier the burthen imposed upon her, the more zealously the trusty creature bent her back to it. But why continue these details? Let it suffice to say, that after an interval of another fortnight, an announcement arrived, that the furniture and effects of Llanrwst had been sold; that the money raised was sufficient to discharge the amount of the fine; and consequently, that my father and brothers, who were imprisoned only till that should be paid, were set at large."

## CHAPTER V.

### THE MISER.

"The first use which my father made of his liberty, was to wait upon Messrs. Clutchem and Holdit, and to endeavour to enter with them into some compromise for the liquidation of his debt. He found them not indisposed to come to an arrangement, provided the details were left entirely in their hands; and as my father knew himself to be in their power, he saw the impossibility of contending against them. An instrument was in consequence drawn up, which constituted them sole trustees of the estate of Llanrwst, for the benefit of the creditors. They were to grant leases, collect the rents, and otherwise manage matters, till a favourable opportunity of disposing of it by sale should occur: and in the mean while they agreed to allow

my father an annual maintenance of one hundred pounds. This was a sorry pittance, it is true; but his circumstances were completely desperate, and it was not without a feeling of thankfulness at escaping a worse fate, that my poor father accepted it.

"Matters being so far put in a train, the next point to be considered was, whither we should remove ourselves. To retire to Llanrwst was out of the question; because, in the first place, the house was bared to the walls, and, with our scanty means, we could not refurnish, far less pretend to inhabit it; whilst, in the next place, had things been different, we should be liable to ejection at a moment's notice. The property was already advertised, with the right of immediate possession; and it suited ill with the taste of any member of the family to appear as tenants by courtesy, where they had so long lived as proprietors. To go elsewhere again, in quest of a home, could serve no other purpose besides frittering away, in travelling expenses, a portion of that income, which would but ill supply the necessaries of life, because every spot under the sun was the same to them, who

could be said to breathe freely nowhere except on their native hills, or amid their native valleys. It was true that, by remaining in Chester, we should be liable to rencounters with many persons who had known us in better days. But it was prudently resolved to keep as far aloof from them as possible, and on no account to entangle ourselves by accepting their invitations. A small house was accordingly hired in one of the back streets of the city, and there, with Margery as our only attendant, we established ourselves.

"The lapse of a very moderate space of time served to convince us, that the apprehensions which we had entertained touching the risk of being drawn into the vortex of a society too expensive for us, were perfectly groundless. It was quite astonishing to see how quickly our country acquaintances ceased to recollect us; for though, for a time, they coldly saluted both my father and mother, by bowing to them if they met in the streets, even that slight token of recognition soon ceased to be offered. Men who had eaten at his board, slept in his house, shot upon his hills, fished in his streams, now

looked the other way when, by chance, they saw my father coming; and ladies who esteemed my mother's notice a thing to be talked about, now stared her in the face, and passed on. We were too proud a race to take this much to heart. At first, indeed, we did feel it, as men always feel mortifications, no matter by whom applied; but the sense of offended pride gave place to contempt for those who struck at it, and we held our heads the higher, as often as one of these petty insults was offered.

"It was not, however, in this respect only that my father learned to feel that there is a mighty difference between the value of a man's friendship when affairs go well with him, and when they run in an opposite channel. Wit[illegible]countable improvidence, he had never thought [illegible]cating any one of his three sons to a profess[illegible] neglect which was the less excusable, as the estate of Llanrwst, had it even been free and unincumbered, was totally inadequate to maintain in respectability more than the eldest of them. The consequence was, that though none of us was deficient in

talent, and though we knew about as much as the sons of Welsh gentlemen generally know, we were totally incapable of earning our own livelihood; and, what was worse, the two elder, at least, were as disinclined as they were unable. We all saw, however, that something must be done. A hundred pounds a-year would go but a little way towards supporting us, in addition to our parents; and hence we began immediately to chalk out lines in which to journey through life. My brothers, with once voice, declared for the army. It was a gentlemanly profession, suited well with their manly habits, and was not beneath the dignity of the ancient stock from which they sprang; and my father wrote, without delay, to as many of his friends as he believed to have interest enough to procure for them commissions. Poor man! he wrote as he ever acted, with perfect openness, made no secret of the derangement of his affairs, and spoke of the near approach of that awful day which should witness the eternal alienation of Llanrwst* from its pristine owners. He did not know of what stuff friends are usually composed. The legiti-

mate day brought back answers from his correspondents; the whole of which agreed, both in matter and manner, to a tittle. They were extremely sorry to receive such bad accounts of his circumstances,—regretted that he had not acted more prudently,—wished it were in their power to serve him; but frankly owned that they had no interest. Thus were the hopes of two as spirited youths as ever served their country by sea or land blighted, and one more instance added to the many which the history of human life supplies, that he who expects a favour from his neighbour must possess the power to oblige that neighbour in return.

" I never had any peculiar predilection for a military career. There always appeared to me to be too much of restraint about it—too much of control, extending not merely to men's actions, but to their thoughts and manners. My taste led me from childhood to love freedom more than life; and had the house of my fathers continued to shelter me, I am afraid that I should have lived and died an extremely useless member of society. But, like my brothers, I saw that the hour was come when it behoved

me not to hang an unworthy burthen round the necks of my parents; and I, too, looked about, in order to choose among the professions. I selected the church; first, because it was an honourable and a useful calling; next, because I believed that it would afford ampler means of indulging my own predilections than any other. The choice was acceptable to the other branches of my family, and from that time I turned my mind wholly to such studies as promised to fit me for ordination.

"In this manner two years stole on, the rector of the parish in which we lived being our sole acquaintance; and as he was a humane and good man, displaying a singular interest in our fate, under his guidance I read, and from him I received an assurance, that when the proper season arrived, a title for orders should not be wanting. But, long before that time arrived, events fell out, which gave a new turn both to the prospects of my family, and to my own wishes.

"My brothers, after vainly hanging on from day to day, in the hope of some opening presenting itself, of which they might take advan-

tage, suddenly quitted home, without so much as bidding their relatives farewell. As may be imagined, their failure to return when evening closed in, affected the whole of us with serious alarm; and during several days after, our fears and anxiety were almost too painful to be borne. Before a week had expired, however, letters were received, announcing that they could no longer endure to add to the distresses of their parents; and that finding every avenue through the aid of others shut against them, they had determined to open one for themselves. In a word, they had enlisted as private soldiers in a regiment of light dragoons, and expected every day to embark with their corps for India. I need not say, that such a communication, though it allayed our anxiety as to what had become of them, was very far from lightening the grief which their abrupt departure had occasioned; yet there was no remedy for the evil, and we submitted. Poor fellows! the sequel of their story is soon told. One of them, the younger, and the gentler of the two, perished by the ship's foundering on its passage; whilst

the other fell a victim to the climate, within a few months after he landed.

"I was now left alone,—with my mother, whose health, never very robust, had of late been visibly declining,—and my father, whose irritability increased upon him so fast every day, as to threaten serious consequences to himself or others. I had no easy task to play; to nurse an invalid, to soothe a ruffled temper, and to manage, as I was latterly called upon to do, the pecuniary matters of the family; but one of my cares was before long removed. My poor mother died about a year after the news of her children's fate reached her, of a consumption, as people in general asserted, but more truly, of a broken heart. My father was dreadfully shocked. In spite of the harshness of manner which had of late obtained a mastery over him, he loved her with the sincerest affection; and as she expired rather suddenly, he had anticipated no such issue of her complaint. He spoke not a word all that day, and I found him on the morrow,—alive, indeed,—but a paralytic and a driveller.

"Now, then, at last I began to think that Heaven had utterly forsaken me; and, but for the kindness of Margery, I really know not what consequences might have ensued. My poor father was in a condition, when to wish for the continuance of his life was to do him the grossest injury. In mind and body he was equally smitten; and he demanded the greatest care and attention, for he could perform no single office for himself. In such a predicament, the services of Margery were invaluable. She nursed him as if he had been her nearest relative; tended him like a baby, and bore cheerfully with the peevishness which even yet he displayed, as often as some fancied wrong was put upon him. But I will not dwell needlessly upon a picture so humiliating. Let it suffice to state, that for upwards of six months after my poor mother was committed to the dust, he lingered in this species of intermediate state, between death and life; and that he fell asleep at last, without having recovered, even for an instant, the use of his faculties.

"There was however one subject of contemplation which, amid all my distresses, still gave me

some consolation, and in which Margery largely participated. It was this: though the estate of Llanrwst had been most industriously advertised, —purchasers being invited to come forward in almost every paper,—no offer, at least none worth attending to, had yet been made: and as time stole on, I began to flatter myself that the debt which brought it into the market might, even yet, be wiped off by means of the sequestrated rents. I cannot pretend to describe the effect which an idea of the bare possibility of such an occurrence had upon me. When I permitted my thoughts to turn in that direction, and they turned thither involuntarily as often as other and more immediate occupation was wanting, years passed away like moments; and I pursued my calculations, with a coolness hardly to be accounted for, far beyond the period when even I, in all probability, should be a denizen of the world of spirits. True, I was ignorant both of the extent of embarrassments, and the system of liquidation adopted by the attorneys; but these were matters which weighed light in the balance against the visions of a heated fancy; and I would have struck to the earth any one

who presumed to assert, that the restoration to its rightful owner of the one spot of earth in which all my affections centred, was impossible. It soon appeared that even this source of comfort was unreal; at all events, that it was less surely founded than my sanguine temperament supposed.

"My father was yet alive. It was, I think, on the day but one preceding his demise, that a letter, addressed to him, was handed in by the clerk of Messrs. Clutchem and Holdit. I opened it, as I was in the habit of doing with all his letters, and my horror may be conceived when I read as follows:—

"'Chester, Sept. 17, 17—.

"'DEAR SIR,

"'We have the pleasure to inform you that a sale of the estate of Llanrwst has at last been effected, under what appears to us very favourable terms. The purchaser, Mark Mangoe, Esq. a merchant of Bristol, trading to the island of Jamaica, has offered for the same the sum of 15,750*l.*—being 3750*l.* above the value of the mortgages upon it; and we hope, in a few

days to send you the balance, after all deductions have been paid.

'We are, Sir,

Yours truly,

CLUTCHEM and HOLDIT.'

"My brain absolutely swam round, as I perused this laconic and impertinent epistle. It fell from my grasp, and with it fell the whole fabric which fancy had so industriously reared. I could not breathe; a film came over my eyes, and I was obliged to lean upon a table, to hinder myself from falling. I was thus circumstanced when Margery accidentally entered.

"'My own darling boy!' exclaimed she, rushing forward and supporting me in her arms, 'what evil has befallen now? What is it that ails the light of my eyes, the child of my earliest love?'

"'Nothing, Margery,' replied I, 'nothing at all,—only our last hope is taken from us:—Llanrwst is sold.'

"'Sold!' exclaimed she, staggering back,—'Llanrwst sold! And who has dared to sell that which was not his to sell?—And who

ventured to buy that which no money may purchase?'

"'I don't know who is the purchaser,' answered I; 'but the sellers are the creditors' trustees. Messrs. Clutchem and Holdit have put an end to all our day-dreams, as far as a return thither is affected by them.'

"'And will you submit to this,' cried she, speaking with extraordinary energy, 'when there is not a man in the lands that will refuse to draw sword and wield gun at your bidding? Will you allow a pair of paltry knaves to give away your inheritance, without striking a blow to save it? O that Mr. Tudor were but alive, or Mr. David either!—they would not see the house of their fathers own the sway of a stranger and a Saxon!'

"'Margery,' said I, rendered calm by her impetuosity, 'how often must you be told that right, not might, has the ascendency now? Two centuries ago, the course which you suggest might have been adopted: now, there is one, and but one, resource left.'

"'And what is that?' asked she eagerly.

"'To purchase it back,' answered I. 'Yes,

Margery, even now, with a prospect so appalling before me, I will not despair of being able to restore Llanrwst to its ancient owners. I will go over, without a moment's delay, to these attorneys—the purchase is not yet completed—and prevail upon them, by any means, to have a clause inserted in the deed of conveyance, reserving for me—me, myself, and none other, the right of buying the lands back again, at the same price which is offered for them.'

"'Now, blessings be on thee, sweet child!' replied Margery in rapture. 'Thou art wiser than all thy kindred; and, with this object in view, what will we not suffer of privation and starving, should it be for twenty years to come! Go, go,—and may He who cares for the widow and the orphan prosper thee!'

"I kept my word. I went directly to the lawyers, and, without a syllable of circumlocution, stated the object of my visit. The men of tape and parchments stared at me as if I had been insane.

"'And what prospect have you, Mr. Davies,' said Clutchem, 'of ever being able to repurchase this property? The balance owing to

you, after your bills are settled, will be but a trifle; and how do you expect, without any business or visible means of subsistence, to save fifteen thousand pounds?'

" 'Leave all that to me,' replied I; 'it may be that I shall not succeed in my efforts, but I am nevertheless desirous of being authorised to make them.'

" 'But there is another party to be consulted,' interposed Holdit; 'there is Mr. Mangoe, who is not very likely, I should suppose, to agree to any such stipulation. No man cares to run even an ideal risk of having his landed estate forced from him.'

" 'Offer him any bribe you choose, short of what is necessary to cover all expenses. Let him buy the lands for thirteen, instead of fifteen thousand pounds, provided he consent to this stipulation;—perhaps the thing may be more easily arranged in this way—keep the odd two thousand pounds to yourselves,—only let a clause be inserted, which shall entitle me to demand back the estate for the same sum which is given for it.'

" 'Well, but if we were disposed to assist you here, young gentleman,' continued the elder of

the two partners,—'and for my part I consider your feelings to be very natural, and very praiseworthy,—there must, you know, be some stipulation as to time. We could not propose to any purchaser that he should be kept in suspense for ever; nay, not even for the whole of a young man's life. Name your period—say ten years, or twenty, or——'

"'Give me thirty,' said I, interrupting him. 'I am now within a month of twenty-one years of age; and if I cannot redeem it before I attain to fifty, I shall never redeem it at all.'

"'Well, this is an extraordinary proceeding,' said Holdit, with difficulty suppressing a contemptuous laugh, 'as ever came under my observation; but, as my friend Mr. Clutchem says, such feelings are very honourable and very natural in gentlemen of old families.—Let me see, this is the seventeenth of September. We had better bring things to terms. Let us say, Michaelmas-day. You desire to have a legal right to recover possession of Llanrwst, any time between this date and Michaelmas-day, 18—; on which condition you are willing to dispose of the property for a less sum than has been offered.—But your father, what says he to it?'

" 'My father,' replied I, 'is, as you know, totally incapable of acting; and I——'

" 'There will be a hitch here, I am afraid,' observed Clutchem. 'I doubt whether the stipulation will hold good.'

" 'Oh! no fear of that,' replied his partner; 'it is a mere arrangement between Mark Mangoe, Esq. on the one part, and Llewellin Davies, Esq. on the other, that the said Mark Mangoe shall, on demand by the said Llewellin Davies, any time between this present Michaelmas ensuing, and Michaelmas 18—, sell and make over to the said Llewellin Davies, for and in consideration of a sum to be stipulated, all and whole, the lands, tenements, rights of warren, chase, manorial rites, &c. &c. appertaining to the property of Llanrwst, lying and situated in the county of Denbigh and principality of North Wales.—There can be no hitch here, because it is an arrangement quite distinct from the sale of the estate.'

" 'I believe you are right,' replied Clutchem; 'and you, Mr. Davies, may depend upon our using our best exertions to meet your wishes in this particular.'

"I did not wish to prolong the conversation any farther; but wishing the two honest men good morning, I hurried back to Margery.

"The poor creature's joy knew no bounds, when I informed her that my object was gained. 'And isn't there the bits of goods up in the vale there? the bedsteads and bedding, and linen, and all; sure they'll fetch something any how? And the tenantry, don't you think but they'll come forward too?'

"'Yes, Margery,' replied I; 'but you are not aware of the amount. What think you of fifteen thousand pounds?—how shall we raise that?'

"The simple being stood perfectly aghast. Fifteen thousand pounds was a sum, of the exact value of which she could form no conception, because it exceeded, to an incalculable extent, any which she had been in the habit of counting upon or seeing. She knew, indeed, that it was something enormous; and perhaps the very vagueness of her knowledge, like the haze which intervenes between the eye and visible objects, magnified the idea which was excited in her mind; but she was quite incapable

of arriving at any rational conclusion as to its sterling value. She made an effort to answer cheerfully, but her manner responded not this time to her wishes.

"'God alone knows, Master Llewellin,' said she in a subdued tone. 'But if honest industry and rigid economy can raise it, it shall be forthcoming.'

"She quitted the room as she spoke, and left me to my own, not very agreeable, reflections."

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE MISER.

"I HAVE said, that the communication from the attorney, and the conference which followed upon it, occurred on the day but one preceding my father's demise. I had heard nothing farther of the result, when on entering his room in the morning, according to my invariable custom, I found that the old man had breathed his last. However low a parent may have fallen in the scale of rational beings—and the poor slavering dotard, whose limbs refuse to do their office, and whose tongue is tied, has surely fallen low enough,—no man can receive the information that he has ceased to exist, without a pang. I gazed upon the remains of my father with extreme bitterness of heart; his state during the last six months was forgotten, and I

thought only of that happier time, when he used to dance me on his knee by the side of the winter's fire, or romp with me and my brothers in a summer's evening, upon the lawn. I shed a torrent of tears over him, which were, all things considered, very unnecessarily called forth; and leaving Margery to direct other arrangements, I retired to consider what was to be done, and to give directions respecting his funeral.

"My mother, at her own especial desire, was buried in the churchyard of the parish where we lived: of my brothers, one found a grave in the bosom of the deep, the other was doubtless interred like his more low-born comrades, without parade, near the spot where he died. I could not reconcile it to myself to separate the ashes of the head of the family from those of his forefathers; and though the state of my finances but ill authorized it, I determined to remove him to the ancestral vault in the church of Llanrwst. With this view, I ordered a coffin to be prepared, and a hearse with a single mourning-coach to be in readiness against a set day; and that due honour might be done to his memory, I wrote to

acquaint the clergyman, as well as the steward, of the time when it was my design to be with them.

"The few days that intervened between the death of my father and the commencement of our journey towards his last abode, passed away without the occurrence of any memorable incident; and on the morning appointed, the hearse and mourning-coach were at the door. Into the former the shell was borne by the undertaker's men; and Margery and I, perhaps the only beings in this large city that really valued the deceased, took our places in the other. It had been the custom of the family, from time immemorial, to conduct its funerals by torch-light; and I calculated the distance with sufficient accuracy to meet a contingency which I had no desire to avoid. We accordingly reached the gate of the avenue about ten o'clock, on the night of the twenty-sixth of September; and the news being spread that such an event was about to happen, there was no lack of mourners or torch-bearers to meet us. By the gloomy and waving light of their flambeaux, we slowly proceeded up the vale, till the procession halting at the main entrance, the coffin was lifted down, that the

inanimate clay might rest for an hour or two in the hall of its fathers, whilst Margery and I, likewise alighting, moved into the drawing-room.

"If you have known what it is to revisit the place of your birth, under circumstances at all similar to those which at that moment surrounded me, then may you form a conception of the nature of the thoughts that crowded into my mind. If such has not been the case, it were a mere waste of words did I so much as attempt to convey an idea of them. The room in which I had spent so many happy days, which I quitted, as it were but yesterday, in all the order of civilized life, was now literally empty. Not a chair, not a table, not a vestige of the articles which once filled it, was left; and the very echo of my own footsteps came back hollow upon my ear, as I walked from one end to the other. It was lighted up, no doubt; for three or four rush-lights were fixed in stands upon the chimney-piece, and a few sconces, nailed against the wall for the purpose, sustained each of them a farthing candle; but the light was only strong enough to mark more sensibly the absolute desolation that reigned around. The same was the

case in the hall. A bench carried in for the purpose supported the bier, at the head and foot of which stood men holding blazing torches in their hands; but except by the presence of these, the void of that capacious vestibule was totally uninterrupted. I could not for a moment doubt that the spirit of rapacity which so thoroughly emptied these apartments of their contents, had spared none besides, and the event proved that my surmises were not founded upon mistaken grounds.

"Whilst I indulged in these gloomy reflections, with a perseverance no more than natural under existing circumstances, an increasing number of voices from without, and a heavy trampling of feet within, gave indication that the hour of the funeral was at hand. I moved to the window; the night was clear and serene, wanting indeed in the majesty of moonlight, but rich with the more chastened and delicate glitter of a thousand stars. The air had forgotten to stir, for neither leaf nor grass-blade was in motion; not a gossamer cloud showed itself to prognosticate a change, from one end of the horizon to the other; and but that groups of mourners, the ancient culti-

vators of the soil, broke the silence by an occasional interchange of sentences, the rushing of the river alone would have reminded me, that nature herself was not asleep. I cannot express to you the soothing effect which this exquisite night-scene produced. It recalled my thoughts at once from subjects harrowing because gloomy, to others melancholy perhaps, but not devoid of a hallow which sanctified the wound inflicted; and I went forth to take my part in the procession, with the spirit of a man who mourns, but, as Scripture expresses it, 'not without hope.'

"In describing the situation of Llanrwst, I forgot to mention, that at the gorge of the vale, and about a stone's throw removed from the bed of the river, stands the parish church, a plain but not inelegant edifice, which is stated to have been erected by an ancestor of mine, not long after the introduction of Christianity into North Wales. Its situation is very striking; for the stranger commands from the churchyard a view of the whole compass of the valley, bounded on every side by mountains; and the river falling over a ledge of broken rocks hard by, amuses his ear as he stands with a ceaseless

roar of waters. It was thither that, according to immemorial custom, the chief of the tenantry now prepared to convey all that was mortal of their late landlord; and the order of the procession was marshalled in strict conformity to what had taken place when his immediate predecessor returned into dust.

"When I stepped out into the hall, I found that the appointed hour was come, and that an old man, who had been steward under both my father and grandfather, was giving his final instructions to the company. By his command, the bier was elevated upon the shoulders of six stout yeomen, four men in black with blazing torches, marching in front; whilst I, as chief mourner, walked by myself immediately in rear of the body, and about forty others came two and two behind me. Each successive pair likewise carried torches, as did two persons on each side of the coffin; and at a given signal the whole moved forward slowly, and in order.

"Had I been less affected than I was, by the realities amidst which I felt myself to be thrown, the scene would have doubtless ap-

peared more picturesque, if not more interesting, than it did. As the case stood, I could not avoid looking up, from time to time, as the flashes of light fell strongly upon the boughs and exhibited every leaf and stem, as it hung over us, in a pale and unearthly livery. The measured tread of footsteps, likewise, with the distant sound of waters, came with peculiar effect upon the ear, and gave a striking air of solemnity to a ceremony which scarcely stands in need of so many adventitious accompaniments to render it impressive. As we advanced, the roar of the river, heard at first but faintly, grew louder and louder. Its clear silver current, too, reflected back the flame of our torches, when, arriving at the churchyard-gate, the clergyman met us, and in a voice scarcely audible amid the din of the cataract, pronounced that sublime declaration,—'I am the resurrection and the life.' And now the bell, whose tolling had been distinctly heard over other sounds, ceased, and the head of the procession gaining the western door, the interior of the church became suddenly illuminated. The light streamed from column to column, and glanced

from aile to aile, as, one after another, the torch-bearers entered, till the whole became so brilliant, that the eye was conscious of a painful sensation when contemplating it. Last of all, the bier was placed upon tressels in the body of the church; the mourners, leaving those who carried flambeaux to stand in a double row along the aile, took their places in pews appointed for them; and the Vicar, mounting the desk, read the striking passages of Scripture, which the Rubrick has appointed to be used on such occasions.

"At the western extremity of the building, and almost in a line with the altar, is situated the vault of the Davieses, the exact extent of which is marked by an iron railing that surrounds a gorgeous tomb. The tomb in question consists of an entablature, or platform, of grey slate-stone, upon which are laid, at length, the figures of two persons, a warrior and a lady, both of them of full size, and resting on their backs. The statues are of marble; but time has wreaked its wrath upon them so effectually, that the features are cruelly defaced, and even tradition hardly survives to tell of

whom they are the effigies. Above them, however, hung incontestable proofs, that the blood of the Davieses flowed in the veins to whose memory the sculptor wrought them, in the form of one or two rusty head-pieces, ornamented with the family crest, and a tattered banner, in which it was still possible to trace, that the device borne upon our shield was emblazoned. Towards this point the body was moved, as soon as the clergyman, after finishing the lesson, had taken his station; and in five minutes my father was laid beside twenty mouldering coffins, there to sleep soundly till the last trump shall awaken all the inmates of the charnel-house together.

"The ceremony was now over, and the excitement consequent upon it beginning to subside, my thoughts were not unnaturally directed to a consideration of the steps which it behoved me next to pursue. I would have quitted the Vale of Clwyd on the instant, had not the condition of the horses demanded a few hours' rest; but as this was the case, a moment's consideration convinced me that, however sorely against my will, I must remain where I was till the mor-

row. I need scarcely add, that there were not wanting numerous and kind offers of accommodation both by the Vicar of the parish and the tenants, each of whom seemed more anxious than the rest to secure the honour of entertaining me; yet, I know not whence it arose, I could not prevail upon myself to pass the night any where except in Margery's hovel. It was the last roof that afforded me shelter ere I turned my back upon Llanrwst; and I resolved that no other on the lands should receive me till I came again to claim them as my own. Thither, therefore, my nurse and I withdrew; whilst the rest of the company, according to established usage, adjourned to the little alehouse, and drank deep, at my expense, to the memory of the deceased.

"I suppose the kind-hearted Margery had anticipated some such arrangement, and given necessary directions to the friend whom she had put in charge of her cottage, for, on entering, I was surprised and gratified to find that a bright turf fire was burning, and that a table furnished in a style worthy of the occasion, occupied the centre of her little kitchen. Every

thing, moreover, appeared to be in the same order which prevailed when, upwards of four years ago, my mother and I took refuge here; and of dampness, or other evidence of neglect, not a vestige could be discovered. Margery could not suppress her satisfaction at the care which had been taken of her little property. 'This is all on your account, Master Llewellin,' said she. 'It is only because they honour the oak, that they regard the mistletoe which hangs about it: and were not honest Rowland a true lover of his master's house, he would not have wasted a thought upon the good of a poor creature like me. But eat and drink, honey dear, and refresh yourself; and then try to get a little sleep in the bed which you once before honoured by occupying.'

"I could not comply with the former of these invitations, for the business of the past day deprived me of all appetite; but I cheerfully obeyed the latter. I did lie down, and in spite of a thousand distressing thoughts of the past, and gloomy anticipations of the future, I gradually dropped into a state of unconsciousness, and slept soundly.

" It was late when I rose next morning; and on walking abroad, I found that the exquisite serenity of the preceding night had passed away. The heavens were covered with dark clouds; a few large drops of rain were falling, and the state of the fields, plashy and moist, proved that there had been a heavy shower. It was well that the case was so. I experienced no desire to behold the scenes of my boyhood otherwise than in shade, feeling, as I did, that I looked upon them, perhaps, for the last time: and it was a sort of relief to me that the sun could not shine upon the picture of desolation and neglect which these scenes presented. For four long years no labour had been expended upon the lawn, the walks, the grounds, or the garden; and the whole were therefore in a state of the most melancholy disorder. Long rank grass and noisome weeds overspread the avenue; the fruit-trees, torn down from their fastenings, trailed upon the ground; the lawn was rough, knotty, and uneven, and the very flowers had either disappeared, or run to waste. In like manner, the house itself exhibited a deplorable example of the consequences attendant upon the

absence of those who would have kept it in repair. Large masses of plaster had fallen, and lay mixed with broken slates, and fragments of broken glass under the eves; the front door, thrown wide open, offered free admission to every stray passenger, whilst a number of broken windows, and the absence of all smoke from the chimneys, denoted that his welcome would be a cold one. My heart sickened as I gazed upon what appeared to me no unfit emblem of the ruin of my name; and I turned away with the firm determination of never again revisiting the spot, till I could behold it under more auspicious circumstances.

"As soon as the expenses of the funeral were settled and other little matters attended to, the horses were ordered, and Margery and I began our journey towards Chester. We reached it in good time, and I lost not a moment in applying myself to the task of arranging, as I best could, my affairs. In spite of the most scrupulous attention to economy, I found that some debts had been contracted, and that to discharge them it would be necessary to dispose of every article of our wretched stock of furniture.

This would, of course, compel me to give up the house, but for that step I was prepared; and I was ready to take it at once, but that some delay was unavoidable, in consequence of the necessity under which I lay of giving my landlord warning. But the question which I found it most difficult to answer was, whither should I betake myself, and by what means earn a subsistence for myself and my companion? I was yet too young to receive ordination,—that source of employment was therefore beyond my reach; and what to do in the interval I knew not. Nor was this all:—though the creditors had agreed to allow my father a miserable subsistence out of the rents, was it probable that they would continue that allowance to me; and if they did not, how should I be able to live? These were exceedingly painful anticipations: happily, before the moment came which would have converted them into realities, the wheel of fortune turned, and other prospects opened upon me.

"About ten days had elapsed since the date of my father's funeral, when I received a note from Messrs. Clutchem and Holdit, begging the

favour of a call at their office. I obeyed the summons immediately, and was received with even more of civility than had been shown to me on a previous occasion. Being asked into a little private parlour, which, though it communicated with the room where the clerks plied their quills, was still secure against all intruders, unless summoned by sound of bell, I found the two partners together, and was requested, with many obsequious bows, to be seated. I took a chair, and the conference began.

"'We have not been inattentive to your wishes, Mr. Davies,' said the senior of the two; 'but we find it a hard matter to put things in a proper train. Mr. Mangoe is a shrewd, calculating fellow, and has given us more trouble than we could have expected in a business so simple; but these merchants are so accustomed to speculate, and find things turn up so often contrary to all rational expectations, that they cannot be brought to see the most ordinary matters in the same light with other people. We have been sadly put to it to convince him that he may agree to your terms, yet do it safely.'

" 'Well, but *have* you persuaded him?' asked I, willing to make our conference as brief as possible.

" 'Why—yes; that is, I hope so,' replied Holdit. 'We have a letter from him by yesterday's post, in which he expresses himself disposed to treat, provided he can have the estate for fourteen thousand pounds, and you limit your privilege of redemption to twenty years.'

" 'I have already told you my mind on that head,' replied I, 'and I cannot alter it. For a man not worth a shilling to accumulate fourteen thousand pounds, thirty years are surely not too many."

" 'What you say is perfectly just,' interposed Clutchem; 'but you are slightly in error in one particular. The sum originally offered, and that for which the transfer of the fee-simple may be had, is fifteen thousand seven hundred and fifty pounds: when you come to redeem the property, you will be called on to pay that amount, not fourteen thousand.'

" 'Then there is the greater need that the time for which I stipulate should not be cur-

tailed,' answered I. 'Very true, very true,' replied Holdit; 'but I fear we shall not be able to bring the West-Indian to this. What if we split the difference, and put down the period of redemption at five-and-twenty years?'

" 'I will not abate one year, one month, nor one day,' said I; 'and therefore, if the business cannot be settled as I originally suggested, the estate must go. Is there any other point to be discussed between us?'

" 'Have you quite made up your mind to this?' asked Clutchem.

" 'Quite,' answered I, rising; 'and it surprises me, that you should for an instant doubt it. I have spoken very plainly; and I never say one thing while I mean another.'

" 'Nay, nay, my good Sir,' exclaimed Holdit, interposing between me and the door, 'don't be in quite so great a hurry. The thing may be done to your mind, after all. Mr. Mangoe has left with us discretionary powers to a certain extent; and though we deemed it right to do our best for a client, we will not absolutely stand in the way of the gratification of your wishes.'

" 'So,' said I, resuming my chair, 'my interests were to be wholly neglected, that Mr.

Mangoe's might be attended to. But, no matter. Speak to the point at once, and let me know when and how this barter is to be concluded.'

" 'Now, if you please,' replied Clutchem, producing a deed from his desk, duly drawn up and engrossed, 'I will now fill up one or two blanks, which were left till we should have had this conference with you; and then, all that is needed to close the bargain, will be your signature.'

" I kept my seat in silence, whilst the worthy practitioner of law proceeded to fill up the blanks in question. This was soon done; upon which he put a pen in my hand, and requested me to subscribe my name at a corner, where he had marked it in pencil.

" 'And what may be the nature of the instrument, which I am now about to sign?'

" 'It is a deed of conveyance,' replied he, 'wherein stipulation is made according to your proposition.'

" 'And the sum which I am to receive, amounts to——

" 'Fourteen thousand two hundred and fifty pounds.'

" I signed the document without asking

another question; and Llanrwst passed from the House of Davies, to all appearance, for ever.

"I was about to quit the office, when the gentleman who last addressed me, once more requested that I would wait a few minutes longer, that every thing might be done in a business-like manner, and our accounts closed at once. I obeyed; upon which three or four sheets of paper, headed 'Llewellin Davies, Esq. on account with Messrs. Clutchem and Holdit, were submitted for my perusal. 'What is all this?' asked I.

"'Only a statement of debts and mortgages upon the lands, with our charges, as agents for the property, and solicitors in your own case.'

"I glanced hastily over it, looking not into the details—for it would have occupied half a day to examine these—but to the gross amount of separate charges. The incumbrances, much to my surprise, fell short, by nearly two thousand pounds, of what I had supposed; they amounted in all to barely ten thousand three hundred pounds. The charges for agency, on the other hand, came up to one thousand seven hundred;' whilst the bill against myself indivi-

dually, for drawing deeds, writing letters, postages, &c. was set down at exactly one thousand pounds.

"'So,' said I, 'I have disposed of a property worth fifteen thousand pounds, that a debt of ten thousand, amply secured upon it, might be liquidated; and an attorney's bill of nearly three thousand pounds——'

"'Our charges are fair and reasonable,' replied Mr. Holdit; 'we defy any man to prove the contrary. We go by the strictest rules of the profession.'

"'Very possibly,' replied I; 'but as our business is now ended, I presume I am at liberty to withdraw?'

"'By all means, Sir,' replied Clutchem. 'But what shall we do with the balance in your favour of one thousand two hundred and fifty pounds?'

"'Give it to me now, if you have it,' answered I. There was no delay in complying with this request. The sum of one thousand two hundred and fifty pounds, in Bank of England notes, was handed to me; and putting these, with the accounts regularly receipted, in my pocket, I hurried home.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE MISER.

"I STATED some time ago, that the only individual with whom we maintained an acquaintance during our residence in Chester, was the clergyman of the parish; and that, taking a lively interest in our fortunes, he volunteered to direct my studies whilst reading for the church. Of late, circumstances had prevented me from seeing so much of him as I was formerly in the habit of doing; and our intercourse, when it took place, had become less confidential; but my affairs were no sooner adjusted than I determined to open my whole soul to him, and consult him as to the most feasible plan to be pursued in my progress through life. To one thing, indeed, I had fully made up my mind, which was, not to break in,

however pressing my necessities, upon the little capital of which I was master, but so to dispose of it, as that, without the hazard of loss, it might surely, if gradually, accumulate. Yet even on that head, I stood no less in need of an adviser, than on the subject of my own future proceedings. I accordingly waited upon the Vicar at his house, was received with the warmth of a good heart, and the candour of an ingenuous temper, and told my story, from beginning to end, with as much calmness as I could command. I summed up the whole by requesting that he would favour me with his counsel, or point out any honest calling into which I could enter with a prospect of success.

"He did not conceal, that the announcement of my determination to devote the entire energies of my mind to one end, greatly surprised him. He had never heard of a scheme more romantic, nor, he must be permitted to add, more extravagant; and he could not but blame me for having sacrificed so large a sum for the attainment of an object not worth the trouble of seeking. 'What possible chance is there,' continued he, 'that you, a young man

totally unacquainted with business, without connexion, without interest, without what deserves to be called a capital, can ever succeed in advancing your fortunes to the amount requisite for this re-purchase? And were the contrary the case, what is there in the idea of possessing a few barren hills and heaths, that should tempt you to sacrifice every substantial enjoyment in life? Really, Mr. Davies, you must excuse me, if I pronounce the entire project to be that of an insane person.'

" 'In your eyes,' answered I, 'and in the eyes of people in general, the project may appear the offspring of insanity; but in mine, and those who feel like me, it is not so. What to others would be ruin, is to us annihilation; for the whole world contains nothing worth living for beyond the range of the mountains that encircle Clwyd. Were it not for the hope of being able at some day—no matter how remote—to return thither, I would lie down and die where I am.'

" The good man was visibly affected by the energy of my manner, and from that moment entered with greater zeal into my views. A

variety of plans were discussed between us, all of which, however, fell to the ground in consequence of some impediment or other, till at last a thought struck him, and he gave it utterance, though not without some hesitation.

" 'It is very clear,' said he, 'that trade will not answer, because you know nothing of it, and would, consequently, be a dupe to every knave who thought it worth while to cheat you. For none of the professions can you be fit for some years to come; and time, in your case, is no less precious than money. I can think of only one opening for you. What say you to undertaking the office of usher at a school? There is a friend of mine at Bow, in the vicinity of London, who keeps a large and long established academy; I believe he stands in need of a classical assistant at this moment; and I think there would be no difficulty in persuading him to receive you, on my recommendation.'

" I grasped at the proposal without a moment's hesitation. 'There are two points, however,' said I, 'on which I should desire to be informed, previous to undertaking so long

a journey. The first is, how shall I be able to dispose of my housekeeper? from whom no consideration on earth will ever tempt me to separate; and the second, can I calculate upon such a salary as will, at all events, leave me at liberty to dispose of my little fortune at interest?'

"The Vicar smiled. 'I will answer your last question first,' said he, 'because there is no difficulty in answering it. In such academies as that to which I design to introduce you, the ushers usually board with the head-master, and therefore, unless it be for clothes, your expenses there will be very trifling. The salary will probably amount to forty or fifty pounds a-year.

"'Oh, then I am satisfied,' answered I; 'one-half of that sum will procure for Margery all, and more than all, that she can desire; and my own stock of apparel, though not extravagant, is sufficiently ample to be kept up by a less expenditure than the other.'

"'But, my good friend,' replied he, 'you are not serious in your design of carrying this honest Welsh-woman wherever you go?'

" 'I never was more serious in my life,' replied I; 'she acted the part of a mother to me in infancy—she has been more than a mother to me since, and death alone shall divide us the one from the other.'

" 'Well, well,' said he, 'this too, I suppose, is one of those sentiments which the mountain air engenders; but, whatever it may be, it is very amiable, and very creditable. Margery is a good servant; to that I can bear decided testimony; and possibly we may find an opening for her, too, in the same family of which you are about to become a member. And now for the disposal of the twelve hundred pounds.'

" I was too happy in the prospects which he had just opened out to me, to be very willing, or, indeed, very able, to discuss any point besides. I accordingly entreated him to take charge of the money, and to apply it in any way which he should judge fitting; and I never found cause to lament that he acceded to the proposition.

" I will not prolong my narrative by giving any detail either of the effect produced upon

Margery, when our probable removal to London was announced to her, or of the preparations which I deemed it prudent to make, in anticipation of a sudden call. Let it suffice to state, that whilst the simple creature rejoiced at the occurrence of what was represented to be a fortunate event, she sought not to disguise her alarm at the prospect of undertaking so long a journey, by which, as she expressed it, 'we should be cut off from even a sight of the blessed hills where all our hopes centered.' Nevertheless, the assurance that no contingency should ever bring about a separation between her and myself, seemed, at last, to reconcile her to the step, and she became, before long, quite as fidgety about the issue of the negotiation as I. But our anxiety was not doomed to be of long continuance. The course of post brought an answer to my friend's application, in every respect such as he had anticipated; and I was engaged as an usher in the Classical and Commercial Academy of the Rev. Stephen Stripe, upon terms even more advantageous than I had been led to expect. As Margery, likewise, was hired in the capacity of under laundry-maid, nothing now remained but to put our little affairs in

order, and set out for the metropolis at as early a day as possible.

"It required neither much time nor much attention to adjust the former of these matters. A small sum of money reconciled my landlord to the premature evacuation of his house; and the worthy Vicar cheerfully undertook the task of disposing, by auction, of such effects as I found it impracticable at once to turn into cash; so that by the evening of the second day we saw ourselves at liberty to move whithersoever we would; and at an early hour in the morning of the third, we mounted the stage, and bade adieu to Chester.

"The journey was literally unproductive of a single incident of sufficient moment to leave a trace in the memory: it was tedious and irksome, as, in those days, journeys by a public conveyance always were; but its tedium was neither diversified by the appearance of danger, enlivened by the presence of original companions, nor rendered memorable by any occurrence out of the ordinary range of stage-coach adventures. The case was somewhat different as we approached the capital. That labyrinth of brick and mortar, pouring out continually,

and receiving continually back in succession, its thousands of men, horses, and carriages, was beheld with feelings of the most indescribable and complicated nature, both by my companion and myself:—indeed, from the moment that we arrived fairly within its vortex, I, at least, may be said to have journeyed in a state of absolute stupor.

"It was late in the evening ere our vehicle, after stopping at twenty different points to set down passengers and deliver parcels, made a final halt in the yard of the Saracen's Head, Whitechapel. We alighted, as soon as it was announced to us that the stage went no farther: and being at once ignorant of the town, and indifferent as to the elegance or inelegance of a temporary quarter, I ordered that beds should be prepared. I will not say one word either about them or the general arrangements of the hotel. Doubtless, you cannot be ignorant of the chilling effect which is produced upon the mind of an ordinary stranger, who happens to establish himself, on his first arrival in London, at a coach-inn; and you may perhaps imagine how grievously it was magnified in the case of one who felt himself to be a friend-

less adventurer. An absolute loathing came over me, as I contemplated the filthy chamber into which I was ushered:—I sickened as I rolled down the bed-clothes and beheld the sort of dormitory into which I might have inadvertently cast myself; and, wearied as I was with a week of incessant travel, I neither undressed nor slept soundly that night.

"Long before the first glimmering of dawn broke through my chamber window, every disposition to doze was dispelled by the bustle and noise attendant upon the successive departure and arrival of at least a dozen public coaches. I rose just as a clock in the office below struck six; and having made but an indifferent toilette in the dark, a measure to which the impossibility of obtaining any attention from waiters or chambermaids reduced me, I descended to the coffee-room. If I had been disgusted by the objects which presented themselves to my different senses on the preceding night, those which met them now were still more loathsome. A lamp, which was suspended from the roof, and had almost exhausted its oil, cast a feeble light through the room, exhibiting half-a-dozen tables

overspread with glasses, fragments of tobacco-pipes, punch-bowls, some of them scarce empty, and other remnants of last night's debauch; whilst a combination of every conceivable stench, rendered doubly powerful from confinement, produced an effect upon the sense of smell not to be described. I retreated from the disgusting scene more abruptly than I had approached it; and, during the next three hours, found what amusement I could in sauntering about the yard, and striving earnestly, but in vain, to inhale even one mouthful of pure air.

" If I have appeared to dwell upon the circumstances attending my first arrival in London with a degree of minuteness to which the importance does not entitle them, my excuse must be, that they have left a trace in my memory not less enduring than that which the branding-iron leaves on the back of the criminal; and that, even now, I cannot look back on the few miserable hours which I spent in the Saracen's Head, without a shudder. Without entertaining any serious belief in the doctrine of omens, I could not, situated as I was, dismiss the idea, that the whole of my future career

would take its character from the commencement; and the agony occasioned by the conviction, not the lapse of more than thirty years has taught me to forget. Heaven knows, that the dark presage was not admitted without reason. But it matters not. The grand object of my life is attained; and though the efforts necessary to its attainment have been unintermitting, and the privations and sufferings which went along with them, such as can be known only to God and myself, the result has taught me neither to lament the one, nor repine at the other.

"Having partaken of a decoction of sloe leaves, rendered less harsh by the admixture of a drop or two of milk and water, which, with a few thin slices of bread and butter, was served up as breakfast, I prevailed upon Margery, not without some difficulty, to remain where she was, whilst I, putting my credentials in my pocket, sallied forth in quest of our future home. By dint of repeated inquiries, I at last found myself in front of a large, clumsy red-brick house, which stood a little to the left of the high road, from which it was separated by a court-yard and a high wall. There

was no possibility of mistaking the uses to which it was devoted. The long, low wings which flanked the main body of the edifice, with the little belfrey raising itself above the central roof, told a tale of ceaseless labour, miserable fare, and merciless regularity; whilst a huge brass-plate, affixed to one of the folding-gates, assured the passer-by, that 'the Rev. Dr. Stripe' resided there; and that he conducted the affairs of 'Gander Hill Classical and Commercial Seminary.'

"I rang the bell, and after a pause of at least five minutes' duration, a wicket, or small door, was opened by a lad in a sort of undress livery, which, slovenly as it was, because manifestly made for a person twice his size, he appeared to have just huddled on for the purpose. On explaining my business, I was immediately invited to enter: and ascending two or three steps to a flagged pathway, which divided into two equal parts an oblong grassplot, I passed towards the house. The next minute I was ushered into what seemed to be a dining-parlour, where I was permitted, for perhaps

ten minutes more, to enjoy the company of my own thoughts.

"I need scarcely say, that the interval thus spent was very far from being an agreeable one. Up to the present moment, I had, less from ignorance than design, abstained from considering the office which I was about to assume, in any other light except as something which held out to me the prospect of a competency. It is true, that when I did permit my thoughts to revert to my own schoolboy days, the insults and degradations to which the unhappy ushers were liable, rose painfully into view; but that was a picture which, as I could not look upon it without horror, I never voluntarily permitted to push itself into notice. Now that I was brought so immediately into contact with the reality, the case was widely different. I felt already humbled and debased. I saw before me only a prospect of grievances less easy to bear with patience, than others, in reality perhaps, more serious; and I shrank with an unaccountable nervousness from the very interview which I had travelled some hundred miles to obtain.

Such was the state of my thoughts when the door opened, and Dr. Stripe made his appearance.

"Every person, situated as I then was, is a physiognomist. Aware that much, at least, of my future happiness would depend upon the disposition of my superior, I examined every line in his countenance with a scrutinizing stare; and my satisfaction was not light, when I read palpable indications of a kind heart and an amiable temper. There was much of intelligence, likewise, in the keen blue eye, with a strong vein of humour about the mouth; and if there was little elegance in the manner with which he saluted me, there was at all events a great deal of candour and cordiality. Our first interview accordingly passed off to the mutual satisfaction of both parties. It was suggested that I should remove immediately to my future home, bringing Margery along with me; and as a mark of respect to the friend at whose recommendation the connexion had been formed, I was invited to dine that day as a guest with the family.

"I am not going to weary you with a history

of the many paltry annoyances to which for a period of a full year I submitted. In the Doctor himself, it is true, I found throughout an indulgent and considerate superior; and from the boys, I met, for a time, with no molestation beyond what immemorial custom has authorised in like cases. My fellow-assistants too, though the reverse of gentlemanly, were, in this respect, as civil as their nature would permit them to be; whilst among the parlour-boarders there were one or two whose amiable tempers and refined feelings went far to reconcile me to the somewhat humiliating task of tending them. But the satisfaction arising from these various sources, was sorely dashed by the intervention of annoyances in other quarters; and these rose at length to such a height that they could not be borne.

"Dr. Stripe was a widower; and though the father of six daughters, the youngest of whom could count full fifteen summers, he entrusted the management of his domestic matters to a woman, of the precise nature of whose claims upon him it might have been difficult to determine. Mrs. Mathews sat at the head of the

table, taking care to place beside herself, on all occasions, a daughter of her own, whom the Misses Stripe were taught to treat with the utmost deference. Both mother and daughter were disgustingly vulgar; but there was this difference between them, that the former made no effort to conceal her vulgarity, whilst the latter would have appeared, had the thing been practicable, exceedingly refined. I pitied the poor girls from my heart, subjected as they continually were to the overbearing violence of the one, and the supercilious impertinence of the other; and I was too little master of the art of dissimulation to conceal my sentiments. The consequence was, that both Mrs. and Miss Mathews became my bitter enemies; and possessing the inclination as well as the power to render my situation irksome, they neither checked the one, nor abstained from using the other.

"When I first arrived at Gander-hall, a chamber on the second floor was allotted to me, not very commodious certainly, but sufficiently so to meet my wishes. I had been an inhabitant of the seminary about three months, when Mrs. Mathews discovered that the room would be

wanted for a friend of hers, who was in the habit, from time to time, of passing a few days with her, and my trunks were very unceremoniously removed to a garret. I made no remonstrance against this, because I saw that the Doctor possessed little will of his own; and I suppressed, as far as might be, every indication, that the arrangement was not to my taste. By acting thus, I doubtless avoided an altercation, which must have ended in my immediate dismissal from the school, but I only increased the hostility of Mrs. Mathews, and drove her to devise new methods of exercising it. Every opportunity was in consequence taken, to wound my feelings and trench upon my self-respect. Allusions were continually made before me to genteel beggars, who, without a penny to bless themselves withal, assumed the airs of people of consequence. At table, I was uniformly placed at the most remote corner from what was understood to be the seat of dignity; and as often as strangers dined with us, the ingenuity of Mrs. Mathews and her daughter was tasked to insult me. Nor did the matter end here. My fellow-assistants, taking their tone from the lady of the house, affected to look

upon me as a troublesome interloper, and the very boys were encouraged to play tricks at my expense. Nevertheless, I bore all for a full twelvemonth, if not with patience, at least without a murmur; and had the malice of these harpies been satisfied to vent itself upon me, I should have probably endured it still longer. It appeared in the end, however, that the animosity entertained for me was extended to poor Margery also. A thousand contumelies and hardships were laid upon her, which she, actuated by the same motive with myself, abstained from noticing; nor should I have discovered the truth at all, but for an accident.

"It happened that I was taken ill one night, and quitting my garret in the dark, I stumbled over something which lay outside the door. The cry as of one suddenly roused from sleep, informed me, that my foot had kicked against a human being, and my astonishment may be conceived, when, on examination, I found that that human being was Margery. I demanded an explanation of the circumstances which brought her here. At first, the considerate creature would have concealed them; but on pressing the mat-

ter, I learned, that during the last month she had rested her over-wrought limbs on no softer bed. The servants, instigated by Mrs. Mathews, not only refused to hold any communication with her, but drove her, by repeated acts of personal violence, from their apartment; and the simple soul, as if there were some virtue in being near me, had ever since slept where I found her. My indignation knew no bounds. I determined at all hazards to inform Dr. Stripe how affairs stood, and either to obtain redress, especially for Margery, or resign my situation.

"I saw the Doctor early on the following morning, and without any circumlocution told my tale. He was undisguisedly shocked at what he heard; but when I ventured to accuse Mrs. Mathews of being in fault, the worthy man's anger took a somewhat different direction. 'The thing was utterly impossible. Mrs. Mathews had superintended the management of his family for more than thirteen years, and he had received the most convincing proof, that she was both a trustworthy and a humane person. He could listen to no complaints brought against one in whom he reposed unbounded confidence, and he re-

quested that I would on no account repeat them. But the ill-treatment of one of his servants, no matter by whom offered, should certainly be inquired into; and in the meanwhile I had better resume the order of my duties.'

"I was not to be thus diverted from my purpose, but again renewed my assertion, that Mrs. Mathews, and no other person, was to blame. 'Nay more, Sir,' continued I, 'he must be morally blind that does not see, and worse than morally blind that does not resent, the treatment which your own daughters receive at the hands of that woman.'

"I had proceeded thus far, when the door of the room burst open, and Mrs. Mathews herself, her eyes flashing fire, burst in.

"'So, Sir,' said she, placing her hands on her sides, shaking her head violently, and advancing towards me,—'so, Sir, you presume to lodge complaints against me,—you dare to accuse me of behaving ill to Dr. Stripe's daughters—you, a poor, proud, penniless, beggarly Welshman! Well, it is all very well, Sir,' continued she, turning to the Doctor, 'very well indeed; but either this puppy, with his hag of a nurse, or

whatever else she may be, quits this house, or I don't stay another hour in it.'

"The Doctor was sadly at a loss how to act. I believe that he loved his children tenderly; I know, indeed, that he was too good-hearted not to love them; and it was evident that he experienced a strong reluctance to exhibit before me, how perfectly destitute of authority he was in his own house: but his habitual deference for Mrs. Mathews was too powerful to be overcome by any other consideration. He would have addressed her in the tone of a superior if he could, but the effort, though made, led to nothing, and his words, instead of controlling her passion, only augmented by attempting to soothe it.

"'Don't tell me of his meaning nothing,' continued the virago. 'Haven't I the use of my ears? and didn't I hear him lay to my charge, that I stirred up people to maltreat the Welshwoman, and that I behaved ill to the Miss Stripes? And am I to continue under the same roof with a make-mischief?—If you think, Sir, that I treat your daughters, Sir, otherwise than is becoming in one whom you have placed at the

head of your family, Sir, then say so; and I will relieve you, Sir, of my presence at once, Sir; but if not——'

"'Nay, nay, Mrs. Mathews,' interposed the Doctor, submissively, 'you know very well that I never accused you of any such thing, and that I am not given to receive complaints of those whose worth I know. Let there be an end of this at once; I am sure Mr. Davies regrets that inadvertency, or excited feelings, hurried him into any such language as that which you justly deprecate; and he is too manly, as well as too gentlemanly, not to say so.'

"'Am I expected to apologize to a person,' said I, 'who has recourse to the contemptible practice of evesdropping?'

"'Evesdropping, sirrah!' cried Mrs. Mathews, furious with rage; 'I scorn your words. I am no evesdropper, not I; but if you will speak falsehoods in so loud a tone, they must be overheard.—I tell you what, Doctor Stripe, my mind is made up,—he or I must find another home within the hour.'

"The Doctor looked beseechingly towards me, and I could not mistake his meaning.

"'Make yourself perfectly easy on that head, Madam,' said I. 'I never intended, unless matters had been differently arranged from what they are, to continue an inmate of this family, after making my present statement.—But let me remind you, Sir, of one plain fact. You do your family infinite wrong, by condemning them to such an example as is now before them. Of what nature the tie may be which binds you and this woman together, I know not; but with a daughter old enough, and sufficiently experienced, to sit at the head of your table, it must be singularly adhesive, since it compels you to fill her place with a stranger. Far be it from me, however, to dictate on such a subject; I have spoken my mind, and now I can only wish you farewell.'

"I passed from the Doctor's study, where the preceding conversation took place, to my own garret; and began immediately to pack up my clothes. I was thus employed when Margery rushed in.

"'And is it on my account, honey dear!' said she, 'that you are going to leave a situation where, your own lips told me, you might be able

in time to do much towards the attainment of our wishes? Sure, now, you wouldn't mind what I told at a moment when I was taken by surprise, and quarrel with the good Doctor because of me?'

"'Even on your account, Margery,' said I. 'No consideration whatever should tempt me to remain another day under this roof.—But do not distress yourself. I have received wrongs and insults enough in my own person, to justify our removal, independently of the treatment which they afforded you.'

"'If that be the case,' replied Margery, 'let us go instantly. Whilst I thought that I only suffered, Heaven forbid that I should complain! because, what was I born for but to suffer in the cause of my master's house, and to bear a thousand things more than I have borne for my own darling child? But if they have put wrong or insult upon you, then indeed there is cause enough why we should leave them.'

"Margery ran instantly to put her own wardrobe in order; and she had scarcely disappeared, when, to my extreme surprise, Dr. Stripe himself entered.

" 'I am very sorry, Mr. Davies,' said he, 'at what has happened. I have entertained for you, from the first, a sincere regard, and I cannot bear the idea of thus dismissing a young gentleman, who came recommended to me by one of the oldest and best friends that I have in the world; but you see how I am circumstanced.—That woman,' continued he, looking cautiously round and lowering his voice, 'is essential to me,—I cannot do without her. I admit the coarseness of her manners; I am not insensible to the indelicacy of her behaviour towards my children; and I see many more faults in her. But she knows my ways; she is thoroughly honest; and I have been so long accustomed to depend upon her, that I could not carry on the establishment without her. You and I therefore must part. But let us not part in anger. Here is the amount of what is due to you, and rest assured, that if ever you stand in need of my advice cr assistance, you shall have it.'

" I thanked him, not without emotion; for I pitied the good man, and I believed his professions of friendship to be sincere.

" 'And whither do you mean to go?' asked he; " and to what occupation do you intend to turn?'

" 'These are questions,' replied I, 'to neither of which I can reply. My first design is to hire a cheap lodging somewhere, and my next, to trust to Providence.'

" 'Are you disposed to take a situation in some other school?' continued he.

"I answered decidedly in the negative; in truth, my blood boiled at the bare possibility of again subjecting myself to such a degradation.

" 'But you must do something,' continued the worthy man. 'Your design of taking orders is not unknown to me, and should nothing better offer, I hold a living in Kent, to the curacy of which I will gladly appoint you. But you are not yet of age to be ordained, and you cannot exist for a year upon that pittance.'

" 'I will do my best,' answered I; 'besides, I have mét at your table more than one individual who has given me an insight into life, such as I never had before. I will see whether

my own talents may not avail something, through the medium of the press.'

" 'Well,' said the Doctor, 'if that be your bent, I may be able to——'

" Mrs. Mathews's voice was now heard at the bottom of the stairs, and the Doctor, starting as if a thunderbolt had burst near him, squeezed my hand, and abruptly quitted me. My preparations, however, were by this time complete. I took my trunk in my hand, descended the stairs, and meeting Margery equally loaded in the court-yard, we passed on unnoticed,—at all events unheeded, into the Hackney road."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE MISER.

As chance would have it, a stage happened to be passing just as the gate of Gander-hall closed after us; and the coachman pulling up, we took our places in it immediately. We proceeded onwards towards the capital at a rapid rate, but rapidity of motion failed in this instance to produce its customary effect, for seldom has traveller had less cause to rejoice at it. I was going, I knew not whither; I was ignorant even of a fitting place of shelter for the night; and as to any scheme for to-morrow and the day after, none such had been devised or considered. It was therefore with regret, rather than satisfaction, that I beheld street after street left behind; and when at last the arrival of the vehicle at its place of destination com-

pelled me to abandon it, I felt somewhat like a man who, destitute of a guide, is overtaken by darkness on a moor, across which there lies no beaten track.

"I hired a lodging for Margery and myself in one of the most obscure of the obscure streets which communicate between the Strand and the River. It was not, as you may believe, either very elegant or very expensive; yet were the apartments far from being incommodious; and after the ceaseless bustle of a school, the very quiet that surrounded me was welcomed as no trivial blessing. Here, during several months, I lived without holding communication with a single individual except my nurse. I did not so much as pass the threshold during the whole of that time; but devoting every energy of mind and body to the completion of a poem, I received by degrees an impression, that the visions which had hitherto passed obscurely and indistinctly through my mind, might be realized.

"In the mean while the slender stock of money with which I had embarked upon my new calling, began, in spite of the most rigid economy,

to diminish. I possessed, when I quitted Dr. Stripe's, something less than fifty pounds; more than half that sum was expended; yet the work, upon the success of which I calculated for a fresh supply, was by no means in a state of forwardness. My constitution, likewise, accustomed to the free air of the country, began to suffer from long confinement in a city; and my spirits, sinking with the decay of the bodily machine, refused to support me longer in my mental toil. Under these circumstances, I was at last persuaded by Margery, who watched over me with the tenderness of a mother, to lay aside the pen, which my own conviction assured me was now wielded to little purpose; and to seek in exercise a recovery of the tone, of which so great a change of habits had deprived me.

"I walked out, and taking the direction of the Park, found myself before long by the margin of the Serpentine, and gazing with delighted eye upon the lively scene around. It was a cold, clear, bracing day in January; and the river being frozen over, its surface was covered with skaters, who passed to and fro with the velocity

of the wind, or moved about and about within a narrow compass. On either bank were crowds of pedestrians, of all ages, and both sexes, with here and there a carriage filled with as much of beauty and fashion as still lingered within the magic circle of London. It was the first time that I had ever witnessed a spectacle, which not less perhaps than any other about town, is calculated to attract the notice of a stranger; and the effect produced upon me was, as it usually is, in the highest degree exhilarating and agreeable.

" I had enjoyed it to satiety, and was retracing my steps towards Cecil-street, when, on passing the upper end of the basin, my attention was powerfully arrested by a small group of persons who appeared to keep entirely aloof from the crowd. There was a plain carriage standing on the drive, within which sat two ladies and an elderly gentleman; a boy, well dressed and beautifully formed, skated near, and the party appeared to watch his evolutions, with a mixture of pride and satisfaction. He was a fine, bold, manly fellow; and though manifestly a beginner in the art, exhibited no symptom of

distrust either in his own powers or in the frozen element. On the contrary, he seemed absolutely to court danger; for, though a board, set up by the Humane Society, warned him that at a certain point the ice could not be relied upon, he all at once dashed off in the direction. The movement was beheld by those on land with undisguised horror. The ladies screamed; the gentlemen rose, and called loudly to him; but the lad merely waved his hand in reply, and rushed onwards. It was a rash act, and the consequences were not different from what might have been anticipated. I had sprung forward instinctively, and was already upon the ice, when, with a plunge, the boy disappeared; the frail substance on which he moved had given way, and he was immersed in the water.

"I neither saw nor heard another object or sound, except the crash of the breaking ice, and the abrupt immersion of the youth; I looked not once about to observe whether other aid might be nigh, but, springing forward, gained the edge of the pool, just as the boy, rising from his first plunge, showed his head above the surface. I grasped at him instantly; but my weight was

too much for the fractured ice, and instead of saving the boy, I myself fell into the water. Still I kept my hold; and, struggling hard, I contrived to plant him with one elbow upon the ice, whilst I supported him from behind, as well as I could, till, the alarm spreading, ropes were thrown, and we were both dragged to shore. But though the whole of the adventure, from its very commencement to its close, passed within the space of five minutes, so intense had been the cold, or so severe the shock to the youth's nerves, that he was dragged out in a state of insensibility. Nothing could exceed the anxiety, as well of the persons in the carriage, as of the people in general, in his favour. He was lifted from the ground, stripped of his wet garments, and wrapped up in a warm cloth cloak, in a moment; and being deposited in the carriage, the coachman was directed to drive with all speed homewards. He did so with an alacrity in apparent agreement with that of his master; and, without wasting one word upon me, who stood shivering at a little distance, the party quitted the Park.

"To say that I did not experience something

akin to indignation, at the palpable indifference displayed towards one who had certainly risked, and might have sacrificed, his own life, in seeking to preserve that of another, would be to assert an untruth. I did feel indignant—so indignant indeed, that I with difficulty suppressed a curse which trembled on my lips; but the feeling was not more powerful than it was transient, and I soon blamed myself for having given way to it, even for a moment. In all probability, the boy was an only son, perhaps the heir of some ancient title or lordly inheritance; and if so, it was very little to be wondered at that the interest of his relatives should be too much occupied about him, to permit their wasting a thought upon me. I blushed for my own precipitance as this idea occurred to me, and, thankful that I had not exhibited it either by word or gesture, I returned home, amply remunerated for the risk which I had run, by the consideration that I had done a meritorious action.

"I said a few minutes ago, that my constitution had given way under long and unnatural confinement; and that when I went abroad that

morning, it was for the purpose of bringing back, as far as might be, both my health and spirits to their natural tone. Such an accident as had just befallen me, was not, however, the kind of remedy of which I stood in need. A frame enfeebled by previous disease was ill calculated to resist a revulsion so sudden and so serious; whilst my clothes, freezing about me as I walked along, struck a chill to my vitals, from which it was long ere I recovered. I was seized that very night with shivering fits, which ended in a violent fever; and I lay upwards of three weeks powerless to perform for myself even the commonest offices.

" I recovered at last; but it was only to discover, that, after the expenses attending my illness were defrayed, little would be left behind out of the paltry reversion of my year's salary. Now then, indeed, my prospects began to wear a lowering and gloomy aspect. It was true, that I could not complain of being penniless; because the sum which remained to me after the sale of Llanrwst, was untouched; but upon, that I had determined never to break in; and nothing short of a necessity more ur-

gent than could be resisted, would ever tempt me to violate the pledge. Something, however, must be done. I returned to my poem. I laboured incessantly, denying to my enfeebled frame both the sleep and sustenance necessary for it; and by dint of extraordinary exertions, I brought the piece to a conclusion. But there was one mighty difficulty yet to be surmounted. I was utterly unknown to the booksellers; I was master of no channel through which to obtain an introduction; and my talents being yet in the shade, I could scarcely hope that even an introduction, if obtained, would prove of service. Nevertheless, my case was urgent; and I determined, at all hazards, to introduce myself to one of the leading houses in the City.

"I was on my way towards St. Paul's Churchyard for this purpose, my manuscript carefully folded in my bosom, when I accidentally observed a gentleman standing beside the window of a print-shop, to whom I had more than once thought of applying in my difficulties. The individual in question was a Mr. Clitheroe, one of those literary persons of whom Dr. Stripe was in the habit of inviting so many to his

table, and who, though not free from faults, had all along attracted to himself a greater share of my notice than his companions. Clitheroe's age might be about five-and-thirty. He was rather handsome than otherwise; and his conversation, in spite of an occasional coarseness, was, upon the whole, attractive as well as entertaining. His wit partook, indeed, somewhat too much of ribaldry, and his jokes and puns appeared to me to be as often forced as natural. Yet there were occasional flashes of feeling, both in his manner and observations, which always reconciled me, at least, to his defects. I had been pleased with him from the first: my behaviour towards him had shown this; and as it is natural to relish the society of those who seem to appreciate ours, Clitheroe had uniformly treated me with marked kindness. I accordingly felt no hesitation in addressing him on the present occasion; and I soon discovered that the good opinion which had been formed of me, was not worn out, in consequence of a change in my circumstances.

"I needed not to inform him that Gander-hall was no longer my home. He had heard so of the

inmates already, and he had made numerous efforts, hitherto without success, to discover the place whither I had betaken myself.—'But you look ill,' continued he, 'and jaded; you have lost your complexion, and your figure is wasted—how is this? Where have you resided of late, and what has been the nature of your occupation?'

"I told him the truth, exactly as it stood; and he heard me to an end, without once seeking to interrupt me; but when I ceased to speak, he gazed at me with an expression of the deepest commiseration, and then said,—

"'Davies, I pity you from the bottom of my heart; not so much on account of the bodily privations which are in store for you; but because of that laceration of every fine and noble feeling which you must undergo, in the miserable course which you have chalked out for yourself. Know you what it is that you follow? Are you aware of the thousand mortifications and crosses with which he must put up, who, with poverty in array against him, aims at literary distinction? Have you weighed well the disadvantages against the benefits,—

the agony of failure, against the triumph of success?'

"'I cannot say,' replied I, 'that I have ever given to the subject the serious consideration to which you regard it as entitled; but this I can aver, that with me there is no choice. I must succeed as an author, or perish.'

"'Is there no other door open for you?' continued he. 'I know that your last situation must have been irksome in the extreme, but then the benefits attending it were certain. Had you not better return to it?'

"'No,' replied I. 'You have never experienced the miseries of an usher's life, otherwise you would not so much as propose a return to it, under any circumstances whatever.'

"'Nor have you experienced what it is to struggle for a scanty subsistence by adopting literature as a profession, not as an amusement.—Davies,' continued he, speaking every moment with increased energy, 'I hate no man with a hatred so bitter as to desire to see him dependent for bread upon a bookseller. Some there are, doubtless, of enlightened ideas and liberal minds, who, if they cannot further your views,

will at least behave towards yourself with delicacy; but had you seen, as I have seen,—far more, had you felt, as I have felt, the degradations to which *poor* authors are compelled to submit, you would close your ears against the whispers of literary ambition, as you would against the voice of a syren. No, no; you have been accustomed to field-sports in your youth; obtain the situation of game-keeper; your arm was once strong, and it will soon become strong again. Row a wherry; drive a coach; sweep the streets; do any thing; but never adopt literature as your profession.'

"I was deeply affected, as you may suppose, by the bitterness and energy with which these words were spoken; yet considering that I had already gone too far to recede, I could reply to them only by observing, that it was impossible for me to think meanly of a pursuit which he appeared to have followed so satisfactorily as well to himself as to others.'

"'I!' exclaimed he,—'I follow it satisfactorily to myself!—You little know either my past or present history, when you hazard such a remark as this.—But come along,' added he,

putting his arm through mine, and walking with me in the direction of Fleet-street,—' I will let you somewhat behind the curtain; and if, after all, you determine to go on, you shall not lack an introduction, at least, to a publisher.'

" The history which my companion communicated to me was one which excited in my mind not so much an abhorrence of literature, considered in the light of a profession, as pity, not unmixed with indignation, at the improvident extravagance of its members. I found that the speaker, like many of his class, had entered life with very slender means and equally slender expectations, yet that he never possessed prudence enough to save out of the superfluities of to-day, so much as might enable him to contend against the possible destitution of to-morrow. With talents of a high order, his extreme improvidence had hindered him from ever aspiring at a rank more elevated than that of a newspaper or magazine scribbler; and though he possessed many of the qualities necessary for the production of a work of real merit, present necessities had continually stood

in the way of his making so much as an attempt to compose it. Then, again, he complained of the griping dispositions of his booksellers; yet I could not but suspect, that things were laid to their charge of which they were scarcely guilty; for it appeared that there was not an individual in the trade, within the circle of his acquaintance, to whom he either was not then, or had not at some time, been indebted. Nevertheless, his story did not fail to make a deep impression upon me. I considered that the very nature of his occupation leads a mercenary writer to set little value upon funds which he acquires, he scarcely knows how, and which pass from him as lightly as they are earned; and the possibility that such a disposition might grow upon myself, was not contemplated without dismay; even though a vision came along with it of success as boundless as my fondest hopes had ever anticipated. Let it be remembered, that I lived for one object alone; and should the habits of a literary career divert me from it, I acknowledged with a shudder that life would cease to be of value. But there was a stubbornness about me which impelled me to go on at all

hazards. I professed my desire, notwithstanding Clitheroe's monitory detail, to avail myself of his acquaintance in *the trade;* and as he readily consented to do for me whatever his circumstances would permit, we walked on together.

"'You have, doubtless, visited Paternoster Row, were it merely as a matter of curiosity; and cannot be altogether unacquainted with the dark and gloomy cells which have sent out so many volumes teeming with learning and genius, to instruct and amuse the world? Towards one of these my acquaintance guided me; and after pushing back a half-glazed door, and descending an awkward step, we found ourselves in a large ware-room, dimly lighted by a couple of bow windows and a cupola, or skylight. The walls were covered on all sides with shelves, on which were arranged volumes of every size and dimension; huge packages of paper, printed and blank, were lying here and there upon the floor, whilst the body of the room itself was filled up with numerous enclosed desks, at each of which sat one or more clerks, in full occupation. It presented, all together, an appalling

spectacle to one in my situation; for the most perfect silence prevailed, and the men of figures paid no more heed to us than if we had been statues. My companion, however, soon broke the spell by which they appeared to be bound. He directed one of them, in rather an authoritative tone, to inform his master that he was wanted; and in five minutes after, the arbitrator of my literary destiny appeared.

"I need not repeat the particulars of that interview. Let it suffice to state, that the publisher, a wary North-countryman, took infinite pains to repress in me every disposition to think favourably of my own performance, by speaking in unqualified reprobation of the subject of my work, considered as a matter of barter. He assured me, that for poetry, of whatever kind, there was very little demand; but that descriptive poetry (and mine, unhappily, belonged to that class,) was utterly unsaleable. Still he expressed himself willing to look at the manuscript, and to give his candid opinion respecting it; and as I found it useless to expect better treatment at his hands, I was compelled to accede to the proposal. I gave him up my

treasure, and, accompanied by Clitheroe, retired.

" 'Now, what think you of that for a specimen?' said my Mentor. 'The fellow is a perfect stranger to your circumstances; he cannot tell whether you be a writer for pay, or a mere amateur; yet you see how slightingly he talks beforehand of a work for which he has already made up his mind to offer nothing. Are you not convinced already, that any honest calling is to be preferred to that of an author?'

" 'Had you not assigned better reasons than this for the adoption of your opinion,' replied I with a laugh, 'I am not sure that I should even now subscribe to it. Probably I am myself to blame in having made choice of such a subject; and if so, we cannot condemn a tradesman because he looks solely to the matter of profit and loss.'

" 'You are a philosopher, I perceive,' replied Clitheroe, 'not less than a poet. It is well that you are so; for I am mistaken if you find not ample scope, ere long, for the full exercise of all your stoicism.—But where do you dine to-day?'

" 'I had intended to dine at home.'

" 'Nay, you shall dine with me. Half-a-dozen of the choice spirits of the age favour me with their company, and I shall be proud to make you acquainted with a fraternity of which you seem determined on becoming a member.'

"I could not very well refuse this invitation, after the friendly interest which Clitheroe had shown in my welfare; and at the hour appointed I repaired to his chambers. The entertainment would have done no discredit to a Peer. Every imaginable delicacy crowded his board, and his wines were at once costly and delicious, whilst the individuals collected together to partake of these luxuries were, like himself, dependent upon their wits. 'So,' said I, as I walked back towards Cecil-street at a late hour, 'it is thus that your gentlemen of the Press live. No wonder that their career is too often but a protracted struggle to ward off utter ruin and escape a gaol, whilst they heedlessly waste upon a single meal, more, perhaps, than the utmost industry may enable them to earn in a week! Well, well, it must be my own fault then if I walk in their footsteps.'

"I reached the door of my lodgings whilst these

words were yet on my lips; and letting myself quietly in, retired to bed with a mind too much disturbed with uneasy thoughts of the past, and no less uneasy forebodings of the future, to find relief even in sleep."

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE MISER.

A FULL week had elapsed without furnishing any tidings from the publisher, or bringing me again into contact with Clitheroe, when, with a beating heart, and a troubled and uneasy step, I once more turned my face in the direction of St. Paul's Churchyard. The truth is, that I had on the previous evening paid away my last guinea, of which a few shillings only remained in my purse, and the prospect even of immediate want failed to reconcile me to the scarcely less horrible idea, that my little reversionary patrimony must before long be encroached upon. There was a vague and perhaps unreasonable conviction on my mind, that should circumstances ever compel me to withdraw so much as a farthing from that hoard, all hope of accomplishing the object, to attain

which so many sacrifices had already been made, must be abandoned; and hence the bare possibility of being reduced to so grievous a strait, could not be contemplated without dismay. You will say, perhaps, that in permitting that feeling to obtain a mastery over me, I was guilty of excessive weakness. It may be so; it was, perhaps, an act of weakness to set my heart upon the recovery of an estate possessed of little more than an ideal value; yet I would not have relinquished that hope for the proudest title under the crown, or exchanged the barren hills of my fathers for the richest domain in England. I experienced, therefore, in full violence, the agonies of one, who sees that his prosperity or ruin is on the dice; for I doubted not that the acceptance or rejection of my poem must determine, at once and for ever, how the speculation in which I was embarked would terminate.

"A ten minutes' walk brought me to the publisher's office, and I inquired with a hesitating and doubtful voice, whether he were at home. I was answered in the negative; but on giving my name and address, it was announced, that a parcel had lain several days in the expectation

that I would either call or send for it. I requested to be put in possession of it, and immediately quitted the shop. There could be no doubt as to its contents. My manuscript was returned, but whether for revision, correction, or as a step preparatory to a definite negotiation, the letter which doubtless accompanied it, could alone determine. I hurried home, tore aside the envelope, and found that my anticipations had not deceived me. My manuscript was indeed returned; and with it came a billet, stating in few but civil words, that Messrs. Ledger and Pica saw marks of very considerable talent in the poem, but regretted that it would not suit their views to undertake its publication. 'Thus,' said I bitterly, whilst I cast the letter aside,—" thus end my dreams of literary distinction; and with them perishes the last hope of seeing Llanrwst again.' I spoke with perfect calmness, with the calmness which always accompanies a real misfortune, though it is frequently wanting when a lesser evil befalls us; and, taking up my hat, walked abroad, without either knowing or caring towards what point my steps should be directed.

"I was too much engrossed with my own

gloomy thoughts to pay any heed to outward objects, when I found myself suddenly grasped by the arm, and, looking round, saw that Clitheroe was at my side.

"'Thou art in a profound reverie, friend Davies,' said he gaily; "some glorious vision, doubtless, is before thee, which I, Goth as I am, presume to interrupt.—What is it?'

"'Glorious, indeed,' answered I, striving to imitate the careless tone of my companion; 'for it points to hopes utterly blighted, and prospects utterly overcast.'

"'The poem has been rejected,' said he with a sneer: 'I guessed as much. I had no hope that, whatever its merits might be, the first work of a nameless author would fare better. But, courage, man—Rome was not built in a day; and though there be bad luck now, there will be better hereafter.—Give me the manuscript, and I will strive to dispose of it elsewhere.'

"I thanked him for his offer; but all confidence in my own talents was destroyed, and I declared my determination never again to submit myself to such a mortification.

"'But how do you propose to live?' asked

he: 'I understood that you looked to this source, not for fame, but subsistence.'

" 'And so I did,' answered I; 'but the trial has been made, and I will not repeat it. Live! —I do not wish to live; and if I did, the means are wanting.'

" 'I see how it is,' replied he; 'like many other deserving persons in this great city, you begin to know, from experience, how keen is the tooth of poverty. Now, as we are in this respect brother-sufferers, you will not refuse me the gratification of dividing with you, in the mean time, what little I possess; and when the tables are turned, and you become rich, and I penniless, you shall divide with me.'

" I gazed at the spectator, whose handsome countenance gleamed with an expression of pure benevolence; and who met my stare with a smile, as if the very thought of doing a kind action delighted him. If ever there was a moment when the project which had so long engrossed my thoughts appeared in other than an amiable light, it was then. I contrasted my own situation with Clitheroe's,—my own sorrows with his; and I blushed to think, that whilst my fellow-

man could struggle against the pressure of absolute want, yet retain his cheerfulness, I could give way to desperation, because a plan, scarce rational in itself, was not about to be realized. I thanked him with the earnestness which this reflection was calculated to excite, but absolutely declined to avail myself of his proposal. 'No,' continued I, 'bad as my case is, I cannot pretend to represent it as desperate. Every scheme which I had devised must, indeed, be thrown aside; but I cannot so far forget what is due to honour and propriety, as to rob one whose means are, in all probability, as scanty as my own. But you, Clitheroe, embarrassed as you are,—how can you dream of offering to divide your little all with a stranger?'

" 'Because,' replied he in a tone of deep emotion, 'the reflection that I do occasionally aid another, can alone carry me through the troubles and embarrassments to which I am daily and hourly subject. Davies, I told you but half my story the other day; you shall hear the rest of it now; and if, after that, you still grudge me the poor satisfaction of serving you, you are no friend of mine.

"'You know what my mode of existence has been for many years back; that I have been tottering on the brink of destruction, evading creditors, and doing a thousand things, of the least discreditable of which there was a time when I would have scorned to be guilty. You know—for I have told you as much—that poverty and I have been so long intimately acquainted, that, in my eyes, it has lost most of its horrors. But I have not told you what led to this:—I have said nothing of the cloud which overcast my destiny, and left me nothing to expect but a life of external mirth and inward misery, till my own desperate hand, or, it may be, that of the executioner, set me free. There was a time when I felt and acted as you would feel and act,—when I was respected, and deserved to be respected, by the generous and the good. Oh! it drives me mad to look back upon the days, when my father esteemed me a very prodigy of virtue and talent, and my poor mother blessed God because He had given her such a son, to be an honour and a comfort to her in her declining years! How often has the kind, good man talked to me of the preferments and

dignities to which my abilities could not fail to lead; whilst she, with a tear in her eye, never omitted to sum up all by exclaiming,—'Preferments and dignities you may not attain; but be a good man, my son, for the blessings which accompany a quiet conscience, as the world cannot give them, so neither can it take away.' But I forgot these lessons, Davies, almost as soon as I began to mix in society. Gay and light-hearted myself, clever, too, as men were pleased to represent me, I entered but too readily into the pursuits of the extravagant and the unprincipled; and long before I attained to the age of early manhood, I was ruined. Nor did the evil stop there. Beset by duns, hunted from place to place, threatened with a gaol, and deserted by my false friends, in a moment of madness I forged!—Ay, you may well start back in dismay,—I repeat that I forged—forged a bill of acceptance upon a banking-house with which my mother's brother, a wealthy merchant, was connected, to the amount of two thousand pounds. The forgery was discovered, as you may believe; but the respect in which my family were held induced the parties to hush the

matter up; the money was paid, and my neck saved from the halter. But it was a blow which my poor father never recovered; he lingered on for a year or two, but it brought him to the grave at last. Thanks to my extravagance likewise, he died penniless; and my poor mother, who had been accustomed all her life to the comforts, if not to the elegances of life—God! how can I proceed?' exclaimed he, dashing his clenched fist violently against his forehead—'my mother was fain to take shelter in an hospital. Can you wonder, after this, if all my friends and relatives turned their backs upon me? Can you wonder if I became, from that hour, an outcast and an alien,—a vagabond adventurer, whom no one loved, whom all men hated?'

"I was for the space of some moments too much shocked by the confession to which I had just listened, to retain sufficient command over myself to attempt a reply. Exerting myself however, because aware that it was not my business 'to quench the smoking flax,' or to add, even by apparent coldness, to the distresses of one already miserable enough, I at last said:—

'Clitheroe, you have told me a fearful story, more fearful by far than I could have anticipated. Your errors and crimes have indeed been great; yet to despair, whilst it only adds one to the number, can lead to no fortunate result. Call to mind the sound principles in which you were educated, and recollect by whom the promise has been made, 'that a broken and a contrite heart shall not be despised.' It is not thus that you can ever expect to make amends for the past; that can be done only by using aright the fine talents which Providence has given you; and, slender as the chance may appear of your finding a fitting channel for their exercise, even to you hope is not denied. Let me beseech you to repress this useless violence; and if the good opinion of one so humble as myself be of value, rest assured, that your conduct now, accompanied by the generosity of your nature, has secured it.'

"Clitheroe made no reply; but grasping my hand in his, he squeezed it with a warmth which told more plainly than words, that my declaration had not been wasted on him. I saw, too, that tears were rolling over his cheeks,

and, so far from desiring to repress them, I hailed the event as the agriculturist hails the coming of a summer's shower upon a soil long parched up. But I was not anxious that the rude multitude should witness the spectacle; so I led him unresistingly onward, till we arrived at my lodgings in Cecil-street. Here we spent the remainder of the evening, in sober and serious discussion, each of the plans and projects which he had formed, or dreamed of forming; and we separated for the night better reconciled than either had expected to be, both to the past and the future.

"From that day forth, Clitheroe and I were inseparable. The confidence which he had reposed in me I did not hesitate to return, and I found that, so far from blaming my design, or turning it into ridicule, he entered into it with cordiality and earnestness. By his aid I was put in the way of earning a trifling subsistence. I became a reporter to one of the newspapers; and thus by devoting my nights to hearing, and my mornings to writing out the speeches of the 'collective wisdom of the empire,' I managed to live with strict economy.

But the atmosphere of a large city was odious to me. I longed for the pure air and freedom of the country with an eagerness not to be described; and happily no great while elapsed ere circumstances enabled me once more to enjoy them.

"I told you of Dr. Stripe's offer of a curacy. The good-hearted pedagogue had not, it appeared, forgotten either the interest which he once took in me, or his voluntary promise; for, on learning from Clitheroe where I had established myself, he hastened to find me out, that he might renew the one, and repeat the other. I closed with the proposal instantly. I felt, indeed, that out of a stipend of sixty pounds per annum, there was but a slender prospect of my being able to save as much as would enable me, previous to the expiration of the thirty years, to collect so large a sum as I needed; yet my situation in London was become so irksome, that I resolved at all hazards to abandon it, should I be driven to the cruel necessity of abandoning my grand design at the same time. In few words, I presented myself before the Bishop, and was ordained.

"This ceremony had passed, and my little affairs being, as it were, wound up, I was preparing to set out for the country, in order to enter upon the duties of my new office, when an adventure befell, which gave, all at once, a brighter colouring to my prospects. It was on a beautiful morning in May, and London, full of the titled and the wealthy, seemed one moving mass of well-dressed people, when Clitheroe and I strolled forth to take our last walk, preparatory to a separation. He had latterly withdrawn himself altogether from that class of society in which, when our acquaintance began, I found him moving; and not having laid himself out to obtain admission into any other, he depended, for companionship, almost wholly upon me. It did not, therefore, surprise me to find him this morning more than usually low-spirited; for the prospect of my departure affected him deeply, and he made no attempt to conceal it. I was exerting myself strenuously to keep up his spirits, and exacting from him repeated assurances, that no sense of loneliness would again draw him into a vortex

from which he had just escaped, when the notice of both was strangely, though somewhat differently, attracted, by an apparition which came suddenly upon us. We were sauntering along, and engaged in earnest conversation, when two persons well mounted, an elderly gentleman and a remarkably handsome boy, abruptly turned a corner, and confronted us; both of whom reined in their horses, as if a recollection of our faces, or something connected with our history, had occurred to them. For my part, a single glance reminded me, that the boy was the same whom I had preserved from drowning in the January preceding, whilst the countenance of his companion was likewise familiar to me, as that of the person who exhibited so much alarm at the moment when the youth's heedless daring hurried him into danger. I felt no desire to address them, though I was equally little disposed to exhibit by my manner that I considered myself neglected; I would have therefore walked on. But Clitheroe, stopping short, shook as with an ague fit, and whispering in my ear, 'I cannot

look upon that man,' suddenly let go my arm, and disappeared. The stranger approached the *pavé*.

" 'Surely,' said he, 'I cannot be mistaken—surely you are the gentleman of whom I have been so long in search, and to whom I am indebted for the life of my son?'

" I would have answered, but the boy, with extreme earnestness, exclaimed, 'It is, it is, indeed, Papa,—it is the very person; and springing from his horse, rushed forward. I took his proffered hand freely; I did not attempt to conceal that I was the individual whom he supposed me to be; but I would not for a moment listen to the expressions of gratitude which both father and child poured forth.

" 'You must have thought me the most thankless of human beings,' said the former as soon as he had compelled me to learn something of his feelings on the occasion, 'when I quitted the Park as I did, without so much as acknowledging the weighty obligation which your bravery imposed upon me; nor have I, from that day to this, forgiven myself the exhibition of an indifference which I did not experience.

But he is my only son—my only, child; and, in truth, I had not, at the moment, a thought to spare upon another object besides himself. Yet do me the justice to believe, that since then I have omitted no exertion to discover his preserver. I have even inserted advertisements in the public prints, entreating him to come forward; nay, the very police have been employed to trace you, though hitherto without success. Now, however, that accident has brought about that which design failed to effect, you must not deny me the gratification of proving that you have vitally befriended one whose fault is not ingratitude.'

"I could reply to this speech in one strain only, by assuring the speaker, that I deserved no thanks for obeying an instinct which few would find it easy to resist; but he was not satisfied. He entreated me to visit him, not as an acquaintance, but as a friend; and on my promising to do so, he put a card into my hand, and rode on. I looked at the ticket, expecting that I should discover there some explanation of the extraordinary flight of Clitheroe; but I was deceived. It contained the words, 'Mr.

E. Montford, Park Lane;' and neither the name nor address threw the smallest light on the mystery.

"I returned home immediately, where, to my great satisfaction, Clitheroe waited to receive me. He was violently agitated; he paced the room backwards and forwards, with a broken and uneasy step; and giving me no time to inquire into the cause of his late conduct, abruptly demanded how I came to be acquainted with that person? I told him; and then, in my turn, desired to be informed whence it happened that the sight of a stranger should affect him so deeply.

"'And you mean to visit him, of course?' said he, paying no attention to my inquiry.

"'Certainly not,' replied I. 'I quit town, as you know, to-morrow morning; and I am not going to delay my journey, for the pleasure of receiving another dose of thanks.'

"'You do him wrong, Davies,' replied he. 'That man is incapable of dosing any one with mere thanks, and will be seriously wretched if you give him no opportunity of serving you.'

"'And how come you to know so much of him?' asked I.

"'He is my uncle,' replied Clitheroe, his voice deepening as he spoke. 'The same who might have hanged me, had he chosen; but who paid the bill which I had forged, and saved me, Heaven knows for what.'

"A light came in upon my brain in an instant. 'I will not leave town to-morrow,' said I. 'I will visit this man; and if he be as you represent, and as his own manner indicates, even yet your just place in society may be thrown open to you.'

"I kept my word, in spite of the repeated remonstrances of Clitheroe, whom a thorough consciousness of his own demerits rendered at once hopeless of forgiveness, and extremely unwilling that I should in any degree mix up my affairs with his. But he had miscalculated the generosity of his uncle's disposition. For a time, indeed, I found it hard to convince him, that one who had gone so far astray could ever be reclaimed; nay, his indignation when the subject was first broached, led him to look upon me with an eye of coldness, which, though

sensible that I deserved it not, I found it impossible to meet with indifference. But when I succeeded in securing his attention, and detailed, as I did in the most glowing colours, the extent of his relative's sufferings and penitence, the good man's compassion was excited, and he promised to look after him. He did so; and before many months expired, I had the satisfaction to learn, that Clitheroe was placed in a reputable walk of life, from which he never deviated by an act of the slightest impropriety.

"My story is now told; for the little that remains to be added, a few words will suffice to explain. I came down into the country soon after I had succeeded in securing a promise for Clitheroe of Mr. Montford's notice; and during a year or two I lived, as curates generally live whose means are straitened. The hope of repurchasing Llanrwst became, as you may believe, every day more and more faint, nor was it till scarce a spark of it remained, that circumstances induced me to fan it up again into a flame. I received one morning, about twenty years ago, a letter from Mr. Montford, informing

me that he had purchased the advowson of a living in Romney Marsh; and that he would feel seriously indebted to me if I would permit him to make out the presentation in my favour. The vision which cheered my early youth revived. I rode over to the place, inquired into its value, and having ascertained that a life of absolute penury would even yet enable me to realize that vision, I accepted his kind offer. From that day to this, my existence has flowed on in one dull and monotonous channel. I no sooner became an incumbent, than I changed my style of living,—not, as is usually done, from worse to better, but from better to worse. I calculated every item of my expenses, to the minutest tittle; I rigidly attended to that calculation; and the great end for which I have toiled has, I rejoice to say, been accomplished. Llanrwst is once more mine, and to-morrow I go to take possession."

Such was the account which my neighbour gave of himself, and such the explanation which he afforded of the very extraordinary habits in which, during so many years, he had indulged.

I need not say that we listened to his tale with the deepest attention, for we were interested in the man himself, and therefore not indisposed to take an interest in his story; and he told it with much feeling, and great animation of manner. For the first time, moreover, since our acquaintance commenced, he consented to eat that night at my table, and at an early hour next morning, set out to take possession of his recovered patrimony.

Though he had promised to write to me as soon after his arrival in Wales, as the multiplicity of business which threatened to embarrass him would allow, I was somewhat surprised by receiving, at the end of little more than a week, a letter bearing the Clwyd post-mark. I opened it with avidity. It was written in the hand of a stranger, and informed me that Mr. Davies had arrived safely at Llanrwst, about noon on the preceding day; that he had wandered over the haunts of his boyhood, like one walking in his sleep; that he had visited the tomb of his fathers, minutely inspected every apartment in the house, causing the very furniture to be arranged as much as possible in the

order which prevailed previous to the execution; that though agitated in no common degree, his feelings appeared rather pleasurable than otherwise; and that he retired to bed in the same chamber which he had occupied when a boy. Next morning, he did not make his appearance so early as was expected; but the domestics, attributing the circumstance to a restless night, occasioned partly by the fatigue of travelling, partly by the peculiarity of his situation, took little notice of it, and abstained from disturbing him. As hour after hour stole on, however, they became alarmed. They approached his door, listened, and hearing no noise, ventured to knock. No notice was taken of the signal; upon which one, who had served his father before him, and was peculiarly attached to the family, pushed it open and entered. He drew back the hangings, and beheld his master a corpse; and the stiffened condition of the limbs, with the cold and clammy state of the skin, gave proof that he must have been dead at least four hours.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE ROSE OF EAST KENT.

At the distance of a quarter of an hour's walk, or perhaps something more, from the Vicarage, in the direction of Shorncliff and Sandgate, stands an old-fashioned, red-brick mansion, the architecture and size of which hardly entitle it to take rank among the seats of the aristocracy, at the same time that they mark the station of its proprietors as having been, and still continuing to be, considerably more elevated than that of ordinary yeomen. It is one of those unassuming piles, which present to the eye of the careless observer, little besides a confused jumble of points and angles, but which, when more closely and more minutely examined, are seen to exhibit not a few of the strictest lines of architectural beauty. The arched windows, with their stone mouldings, the door-

ways sheltered by stone porticoes from the weather, the pointed roof and tall chimneys, equally indicate, that the foundations were laid at a period when the art of house-building was understood, at least, better than it is now, whilst they give sufficient confirmation to the opinion which refers the date of its erection to the times of Elizabeth, or her immediate successor.

In perfect agreement both with the style and extent of the building are the grounds by which it is surrounded. A neat, well-mown lawn, with a flower-garden and shrubbery, lie in front, beyond which are the green downs planted here and there in clumps; on either hand are a few trees, which serve at once to shelter the edifice from the winds, and to hide the outbuildings, whilst in rear is a steep bare hill, surmounted on the summit by a grove or toll of Scotch firs. Probably, it is to the presence of this venerable knot of fir-trees, that the place is indebted for its name; at least there is no other imaginable reason to be assigned, why it should be called the Toll.

The mansion which I have just described,

and to which a moderate estate is attached, belonged for upwards of three centuries to a family named Wilmot; a race which, by some accident or other, contrived never, by exertion on the one hand, or misconduct on the other, either to rise or fall in the world. There is no tradition on record of any individual bearing the name, having rendered himself conspicuous either in arts or arms; none of them ever embarked in trade, at least with enterprise or advantage, and none was ever branded as a villain, or ridiculed as a spendthrift. On the contrary, they jogged along the beaten path of life, respectable and respected, in that middle station which is said to be the most conducive to happiness; and whilst they always kept their heads well above water, they did little more. The consequence was, that the Toll underwent no change, either as to its extent or fertility. One generation received it from another, in precisely the same condition in which the first had received it from the generation preceding; the fields attached to it were not increased, neither were they diminished; no rooms were added to the mansion, neither were any taken

away;—in one word, amidst the revolutions which sublunary things are doomed continually to undergo, the Toll, and the Toll alone, remained stationary.

At the period when circumstances induced me to take up my abode in St. Alphage, the family at the Toll consisted of two persons;—Captain Wilmot, a retired officer of the navy, and his daughter Rose. The former, who was considerably advanced in life, had served his country in every climate, with the fortune which usually attended his family; for though he was admitted to be an excellent officer and thorough seaman, no opportunity ever presented itself of signalizing himself. He was respected, indeed, in his profession, beloved by the men whom he commanded, and as an inferior, had more than once exhibited proof that his courage was as cool as it was daring; but since he himself filled a situation of responsibility and trust, fate had never thrown him in the way of gathering a single laurel. In like manner, his cruises, though not absolutely barren, had been productive of, comparatively speaking, little prize-money. Some, doubtless,

he acquired, sufficient, indeed, to cover those extra expenses which the pay of a post-captain scarcely enables him to meet, with a slender residue, barely adequate to complete a few repairs, and keep the Toll in its primitive condition. But of the fortunes which naval commanders sometimes make, Captain Wilmot knew nothing, except by report.

The history of this man had not, as far as I could learn, been marked by any incidents greatly at variance with the common occurrences of life. One such there unquestionably was; and as, to a certain degree, the future destiny both of himself and his child may be said to have been affected by it, it may not be amiss if I record it; premising, however, that the information which I am about to record, was not communicated to me by the Captain himself. I am indebted for it to an individual of whom no mention has as yet been made, but who, if long and faithful services, and a devoted attachment to his master's interests, entitle a domestic to notice, ought not to be passed over. The individual in question was old Bligh, a man who, like his master, had

spent his best days in the navy; who began his career as a cabin-boy in the frigate of which Captain Wilmot was the first-lieutenant, and who, when the lieutenant obtained promotion, followed him to his own ship. Here Bligh continued to serve his officer, first as cockswain to the Captain's barge, afterwards as steward in the cabin. When the Captain himself abandoned the service, Bligh did not forsake him; and he now executed at the Toll the joint offices of maître-d'hotel, footman, and head-gardener. From this man, who spoke of his master and mistress, not as menials generally do, but as a humble and attached relative, I collected the following anecdote; and there were a variety of circumstances which led me to conclude that it was strictly true.

The mother of Rose, it appeared, was an Irish woman, the daughter of an ancient but poor Milesian family. Her name was Fitzgerald, and she was a native of the romantic district of Bantry Bay, not far from the shores of which stood her father's castle, still frowning in all the pride of baronial magnificence, but almost entirely denuded of the acres which once afforded a princely

revenue to its owners. It is not necessary to state, that wherever the virtue of hospitality may be obsolete, it still exists among the gentry of Ireland; nor could any of the class boast of a larger portion of the spirit, than Mr. Fitzgerald. A King's ship never came to an anchor in the bay without an invitation being immediately conveyed to its officers, who were expected, as often as their duty would permit, to make Fitzgerald Castle their home; and if the fare to which they were introduced could not always boast of an excess of refinement, it was at least very abundant, and very freely given. Among other stations to which the vessel which Captain Wilmot commanded, was sent, Bantry Bay chanced to be one; and the same liberality which had been afforded to others, was extended to him. He became a frequent visitor at the Castle; and no great while elapsed ere he conceived the idea of forming a closer connexion with its proprietor.

Though poor in worldly substance, Mr. Fitzgerald, like many other men similarly circumstanced, was rich in being the father of seven unmarried daughters, of whom the mother of Rose was the youngest. "She was a beautiful

creature, Sir," continued Bligh; "in short, just such another as Miss Rose herself; and so merry, and kind-hearted, and free in her manners, that it was a real pleasure to be near her. Well, what does my master do? Without considering that an old crazy hulk of a sea-officer is no fit match for a girl of nineteen, he proposed to make her his wife, and the proposal was not objected to by my lady's father. But she, poor soul!—you never witnessed such a change as came over her, from the time when her wedding was first talked of. She did not refuse him, it is true; for why? —she was portionless; and her father made no secret of his desire to see her wedded and settled; but she lost from that moment all her gaiety and mirth, and became as grave and woe-begone as need be. Well, well, why make a short story long? They were married; the Captain carried her away in his own ship; and the ship being paid off soon after, we all removed here, into Kent."

It is probable that change of scene, and a constant intercourse with strangers, served for a time to elevate the spirits of Mrs. Wilmot; for, according to Bligh's account, her manner

was more cheerful during the voyage and journey, than it had been for many weeks before; but she no sooner found herself settled in a fixed habitation, than her melancholy returned with increased force. No husband could behave with greater kindness towards his wife, than Captain Wilmot behaved towards her. She never expressed a wish that he did not immediately gratify; but as he was more than double her age, she never could, and never did, regard him in the light of a companion. On the contrary, though sensibly alive to his generous treatment, there was an involuntary shrinking back whenever he approached her, which she could not always conceal, even from him; but which she accounted for by attributing it to a nervous affection, to which from her childhood she had been liable. Nor was this all. She felt, with an intensity such as is experienced only by the native of a mountainous country, her separation from all the objects, animate or inanimate, with which her childhood had been familiar; and she pined to visit again the spot of her birth. So, at least, she herself asserted; but

whether there might not be some cause for her dejection more deep even than this, may very well be doubted.

Mrs. Wilmot's health declined so fast under the pressure of mental distress, that the Captain determined, with the view of leaving nothing undone that could be effected, to carry her back, for a while, to Bantry. One circumstance only prevented him from executing that design immediately, which was, that she promised, before long, to add another to the objects of his love; but the very prospect seemed to cheer her, and for a season good hopes were entertained that she might yet do well. Sorrow, however, from whatever cause arising, had done its work too effectually. She gave birth to Rose in due time, and she never quitted her room after.

So far Bligh's story presented few traits, which may not be discovered in the details of human life as it appears every day: there was one fact, however, attending this transaction, to which I could not listen without a sense of painful mistrust. It appeared that when all hope of her recovery ceased to be en-

couraged, Mrs. Wilmot desired to be left alone with her husband, and that they continued shut up together for some time. What passed during that solemn interview no one can tell; but the Captain, when he came forth, was an altered man; though the only words which he was heard to utter, calculated in any degree to throw a light upon the mystery, were these. As he hurried through the passage, he smote his hand violently on his forehead, and exclaimed, "Oh, God! why was it concealed from me! why was this done!" Beyond this, however, he never went; and his unintermitting attention to his wife showed, that of whatever nature her communication might be, it contained no disclosure derogatory to her honour. But the Captain's care and kindness were equally unavailing. Mrs. Wilmot died, and was followed to her grave by a profound and sincere mourner in her husband.

It would have been strange had a child, born under circumstances similar to the above, proved other than an object of the tenderest affection and liveliest interest to its parent. Captain Wilmot may be said, for a time, to

have lived only whilst his daughter was present to his gaze; and the extravagance of his attachment, though it took a somewhat different turn, abated in no degree to the last. It is true, that there was always a dash of melancholy even in his most intimate converse with his child; he never spoke to her in a tone of easy gaiety; and his eyes have often been seen to fill with tears as they rested upon her; but nobody expressed surprise at this, inasmuch as she was the very image of her mother. But there were other peculiarities about the Captain. He was never known, from the day of his wife's funeral, to make so much as an allusion to his married life, nor did Rose ever hear him mention her mother's name. People put their own construction on this matter, according to their different dispositions and tempers, some attributing it to one cause, and some to another; but as the truth has never come out, it were little better than a waste of time to hazard even a conjecture about it.

In the meanwhile the infant grew apace, and, after some female ancestor, by the Wilmot side, was christened Rose; and well worthy

was she of so sweet a name, for there never lived a human being more perfectly attractive. She was beautiful,—yet her personal beauty formed the very least of her attractions. Artless, gentle, and generous, Rose was never so happy as when accident or design enabled her to increase the happiness of others; and she was, in consequence, an object of love and esteem to the whole of the surrounding neighbourhood. As she passed from stage to stage, from infancy to childhood, and from childhood to youth, every day brought to light some new excellence, of which it was scarcely believed that she was possessed. There was a gravity about her, the offspring, in all probability, of peculiar circumstances, which rendered her at a very early period a companion to the old; whilst it was tempered by so happy an intermixture of animation and life, that she entered at all times no less freely nor less spiritedly into the amusements of the young. I should say, indeed, that her disposition was rather serious than gay, —that she thought much, and felt deeply, without caring to give proof of the former, or make a display of the latter; yet were it an act of in-

justice towards her did my description create the notion that she was either sensitively shy, or affectedly prudish. On the contrary, she was the very child of nature; and so perfectly aware were her acquaintances of this fact, that she went among them by the endearing appellation of the Rose of East Kent.

Rose was not accomplished in the ordinary acceptation of that term; that is to say, she was no classic, and the only modern tongues with which she was acquainted were the English and the French. She played, indeed, and sang, with taste and feeling; but her sole instrument was the piano-forte; and her collection of music consisted almost entirely of wild and simple national airs. But Rose was possessed of acquirements far more valuable than can be bestowed by the ablest masters. Her heart was good, her understanding was clear, and her disposition just so far romantic as to give a zest to the enjoyments of real life, without contributing, in any very serious degree at least, to magnify its petty grievances. But above all, Rose was religious, not, as sometimes happens, ostentatiously so, but vitally and sincere-

ly religious. She believed that it was her duty to do to all as she would have others to do to herself; she was consequently a generous, whilst she was a most judicious friend to the unfortunate. She believed that it was her duty to contribute, as far as lay in her power, to the instruction, as well as to the bodily wants of the poor; she therefore attended our village school with zeal and punctuality; but she did not consider that her station in life had imposed upon her the office of a controversialist. Rose was no disputant upon points of doctrine, either in the cottage or elsewhere; and having a profound respect for religion, she very seldom made it the subject of her every-day conversation. In a word, Rose Wilmot was one of those perfect beings whom men are apt to consider as too good for earth, and whose premature deaths give, in too many instances, a sort of confirmation to the theory.

Such were the inhabitants of the Toll when I first arrived in Kent; Rose being then in her eighteenth, as her father was in his sixty-seventh year. I soon became a visitor at the house; and when my mother and sister arrived, to super-

intend my domestic affairs, the acquaintance, which had already begun, was continued with daily increasing intimacy. The Captain, frank, open, and manly, made no parade of wealth, nor pretended to entertain in a style to which his fortune was inadequate; but to his plain fare we were ever welcome; whilst Rose finding in my sister a companion to her taste, the two became before long inseparable.

It appeared that Rose had not attained even to her years, without more than one suitor addressing her in the language of honourable love. Her hand had been solicited by the son of a neighbouring squire, who submitted to so heavy a degradation, only because he believed his child's peace of mind to be at stake. The youth was rejected, greatly to his own surprise and his father's indignation. A similar fate attended the advances of a beneficed clergyman and an attorney, though the former was in possession of more than one good living, and the latter could boast of an extensive and lucrative practice. Neither the one nor the other fared better than their haughtier rival, with a being whose heart seemed steeled against the inroads

of the tender passion. I need scarcely add that no arguments were employed by Captain Wilmot with a view of influencing his daughter's conduct in such a matter. He determined to leave her perfectly at liberty to choose for herself, in a case where, above all others, individual feeling ought mainly to be consulted; and he was rather glad than otherwise, when she declared, that her wish was to live on, as she had hitherto done, with him. Thus, up to her nineteenth year, Rose continued to devote herself to the happiness of her father, to whom she was deservedly dear as light to the eye, without wasting a thought upon subjects which are said, I know not how justly, to hold, for the most part, rather a prominent position in maidens' minds.

# CHAPTER XI.

## THE ROSE OF EAST KENT.

TIME passed, and in his progress brought round a season, which at the Toll was always kept as a sort of festival. It was at the close of a September day, when a party, which had assembled there for the purpose of celebrating, by a sort of fête champêtre the anniversary of Captain Wilmot's birth, deemed it prudent to take shelter against a threatened thunder-storm, under his hospitable roof. The rain had begun to descend in torrents, and the first flash of lightning had passed, when a loud knocking at the outer door gave notice that others besides ourselves stood in need of shelter. Not a moment was lost in paying attent[illegible]ignal; the door was immediately opene[illegible]re was ushered into the parlour a person arrayed in

the dress of a sportsman, of whom nobody present knew any thing, but who entered with an air of perfect self-command, which, widely removed from impertinent assurance, can be assumed only by the man of fashion and the gentleman. In the same spirit which swayed his address at entering, he offered his apology for thus breaking in upon the privacy of a domestic circle, by stating, that he was shooting in the adjoining fields when the storm began, and had sought the first cover that presented; and as a lack of hospitality was not one of the Captain's vices, the apology was accepted with perfect readiness. Nor was this all. The stranger was invited to lay aside his gun, tie up his dogs for the evening, and join our party; with both of which requests he considered it proper to comply; and he soon entered into the feelings of those about him, with as much ease as if he had been known to them all for years.

As there was no restraint about our new acquaintance, but a few minutes elapsed ere he made [illegible]n to us both his name and condition in life [illegible]ted himself to be the Honourable Major Elliot, of the — Regiment of In-

fantry, at that time quartered in the barracks at Shorncliffe; that he was in temporary command of the battalion, and that, being a keen sportsman, he spent a good deal of his time among the hills and valleys near. As may be imagined, this piece of intelligence did not render him who gave it one whit less interesting than he was before in the eyes of any one present. It is true, that his general appearance and manner had already created an impression greatly in his favour. His age might be, upon a rough guess, about six or seven and twenty: both in face and figure he was strikingly handsome; and there was an expression in his countenance of great candour, high courage, and very considerable intelligence; whilst his bearing was frank, open, manly, and humorous, such as conveyed altogether the idea of a well-bred, gallant, and polished young soldier. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied, that a knowledge of both his professional and civil rank had not a tendency to give to these accomplishments less than their [illegible]gitimate [illegible] more especially in the eyes of the fe[illegible] On the contrary, a close observer migh[illegible] [illegible] chance,

have noticed that somewhat of an opposite effect was produced; and that his conversation, abundantly attractive in itself, became even more valued after his designation was made public. Yet let justice be done; it must be allowed that a more fascinating youth than the Major is not every day to be met. There was no topic on which he appeared to be at a loss. With the Captain he talked of war, of battles by sea and land, till the veteran's heart was won; with others, whether the subject of books was introduced, or music, or the arts, he was equally at home;—in a word, he gave a perfectly novel turn to the discussions of the evening, which all felt and admitted to be for the better. Under such circumstances, it is not to be wondered at if he made large demands upon the good opinion of the entire party, or that minutes and hours stole away much more rapidly than at other meetings of the kind they had been in the habit of doing.

At last the sight of the moon sailing through a clea[illegible] cloudless sky seemed to remind the Ma[illegible]t the moment of his departure had come; h[illegible] rose, not, as it appeared, without re-

luctance, and saying something about a three miles' walk across a rough country, prepared to withdraw. If such were really his feeling, and future events abundantly demonstrated that it was, he might, at least, derive consolation from the unequivocal proofs which were given, that regret at parting was not experienced by him alone. All of us looked as if we could have desired the hour of separation to be postponed, though none ventured to say so in express terms. But the honest Captain would not suffer him to pass thus.

"I trust," said he, shaking him heartily by the hand, "this is only the commencement of a more intimate acquaintance. I am an old man, and can hardly promise to make my way so far as your quarters; but if you will consent to waive such a ceremony, the more frequently we see you here, the better I shall be pleased." The soldier expressed himself obliged by so hospitable an invitation. He promised that not many days should elapse ere he again presented himself; and gracefully taking leave of the ladies, he returned the Commodore's squeeze and withdrew. We

heard his whistle, and the barking of his dogs, and he was gone.

"A very nice, pleasant, unassuming young man," said the Captain, as soon as his back was turned, "with none of the foolish airs of a sprig of nobility about him. Depend upon it, Mr. Williams, the navy and army are the schools for your honourables. There is no sporting the great man where rank goes by seniority, and where discipline teaches the lord that he may be ordered about at pleasure by the commoner. I dare say he is a good soldier too. He talks like a man who is an enthusiast in his profession; and neither sailors nor soldiers are worth a doit unless they be enthusiasts. Well, well, we must find no fault with a storm which has brought us so agreeable a companion." In these praises all present joined; and as if the soul of the party had gone with the subject of their commendations, the guests soon after separated, leaving the Captain and his daughter to their private meditations.

# CHAPTER XII.

## THE ROSE OF EAST KENT.

IT very soon appeared, that if the family at the Toll were pleased with their new acquaintance, the Major was no less gratified by the occurrence, or less anxious to avail himself of the invitation which he had received. Two days only elapsed, ere he made good his threatened visit. On that occasion he wore an undress uniform, and rode a beautiful Arab pony, and as both the costume and attitude became him, appeared to peculiar advantage. He was animated in the extreme, repeatedly expressed his gratitude to the friendly storm which had driven him for shelter under the old man's roof, and said and did all those little nameless things which never fail to win upon the good opinion of persons ignorant of the ways of the world, and therefore disposed to

consider others as innocent and sincere as themselves. The result was, that after a protracted call of several hours' duration, and after resisting the repeated invitations of his host to stay dinner, he departed, leaving behind him an impression so favourable in the minds of his new friends, as to render him secure of a cordial reception, let him return when he might.

How felt Rose all this while, and what was the nature of the impression made upon her? She had seen the stranger but twice; of his character and connexions she knew nothing; he was agreeable, it is true, and well-informed, but he might be a villain for all that. Many an elegant exterior covers a black and depraved heart. But what knew Rose of this? Her world was comprised within the circuit of a few miles, and with the characters of all its inhabitants she was familiarly acquainted. She had never yet met with a bad man who was agreeable, or with a good man who was disagreeable; how then could she tell that such discrepances exist? I have already hinted that Rose was a romantic girl—her very excellences were all tinctured with that spirit, otherwise they could not have been carried to

the extent to which she did carry them; and hence it appeared to her, that till now she had never beheld a human being worthy of a woman's truest and warmest devotion. Major Elliot seemed to possess all that man can ever possess of relative perfection. She thought of him, when alone and awake, with an intensity of feeling, for which she either could not or sought not to account. The harmonious tones of his voice were ever in her ear; the sparkle of his bright eye was continually before her; especially as it beamed upon her with a soft and languid expression, after she had sung to him one of the exquisite airs of her maternal country. And then her dreams—they were all of Elliot. In one word, Rose loved the stranger already. Two days, spent partly in his presence, had done more than all the attentions of either her clerical or legal suitor;—her destiny was fixed.

Whether the feeling was mutual, and Elliot as deeply smitten with Rose, as Rose with Elliot, came not to be known for some little time. It is true that he appeared at the Toll very frequently: by some chance or other he had always a little business to transact at Folke-

stone; and as the ride across the hills was far more beautiful than along the coast, he invariably preferred it. This happened for a while, perhaps twice or three times a-week; gradually the visits were more frequent; and, at last, they were things of every day's occurrence. In a word, within a month from their first meeting, Major Elliot formally declared the passion which his manner and marked attention had already sufficiently betrayed, and urged an immediate compliance with his wishes. Rose heard him with the agitation which such a proposition never fails to produce in the breast of a delicate-minded female. She was far too artless to conceal the influence which he had obtained over her, and far too innocent to deny it: she gave him all the encouragement which he could expect her to give, and referred him to her father for the rest. The old man, it is probably needless to say, was delighted by the occurrence. To see his daughter happy was the only ardent wish of his heart; and such was the opinion which he had formed of the Major's good qualities and character, that he received him with open arms, as the future guardian of his dearest earthly treasure.

I have recorded these matters exactly as they occurred, without any observation or comment of my own. Doubtless, both father and daughter acted imprudently, in suffering things to proceed thus far, without making any previous inquiry into the circumstances of the lover; but let them not be blamed too severely. Than Major Elliot, it would be difficult to meet a more agreeable or gentlemanly man. His brother officers all spoke highly of him, as a good soldier, and as one likely to rise in his profession. Of his rank in life no doubt could exist—for there stood his name in the Army List, having the word 'Honourable' prefixed to it in legible characters. With respect to his fortune, again, he himself never represented it as great; and, what is more, he honestly confessed that there was no prospect of an addition being made to it, except from advancement in the service, or some staff, or other lucrative appointment. His father being dead, he had nothing to look for from that quarter; and his brother being a poor peer, it was to be expected and desired, that such of their more distant relations as possessed money, would leave it all to

support the dignity of the title. When a young man acted thus honourably; when he neither made, nor attempted to make, the smallest concealment in his affairs; when his proposals were such as no one could object to, and his behaviour, to the most remote particular, correct and delicate, it was not to be expected that a man honourable as Captain Wilmot was, should entertain any suspicions, or deem it at all requisite to institute such inquiries as might lead the individual inquired about to feel that he was regarded with an unkindly eye. The Captain was too good-hearted to act thus. Rose was satisfied with her father's approbation; and the lovers accordingly continued to enjoy as much of each other's society as the professional duties of the soldier, and the domestic and charitable occupations of Rose, would allow.

It was soon an understood thing, that Rose Wilmot was engaged to Major Elliot. Many were the congratulatory sentences to which she was doomed for a while to listen; and many the stale jokes, and heartless insinuations with which she was doomed to be pestered. Rose bore it

all with great equanimity; but she gradually dropped the company of her more talkative friends, and, at last, by the especial request of her lover, confined her visits entirely to the Vicarage. For ourselves, we never entered into the coteries of the neighbouring town; and hence, the only variety afforded before long to the enamoured pair, at least in the way of visiting, occurred when they partook of the plain hospitality of our poor dwelling, or we partook of that at the Toll.

The faith of the lovers had now been plighted several weeks; and many little pledges of unalterable affection had passed between them. Among other gifts, the Major had presented Rose with the identical Arab pony on which he had himself been mounted when he paid his second visit to the Toll; and the animal became, as a matter of course, a prodigious favourite with its mistress. Gentle and tractable, it not only permitted her to ride with the most perfect ease and safety to herself, but it soon came to know her voice, and would prick up its ears and canter towards her, whenever she called it. They were a lovely pair, Rose and her Arab;

it seemed as if the one had been formed expressly for the other. The day being already fixed for the wedding, and the nature of the connexion fully known, Rose did not scruple to ride out with Elliot whenever he wished it. She was too pure for the most determined villain to offer her an insult; and her purity was too well known for the tongue of scandal to be moved at the proceeding.

Things had continued thus, and the wedding-day was but one little week distant, when Rose, who had agreed to meet Elliot half-way between Folkestone and Shorncliff, set out one morning upon her pony, unattended. She rode on at a gentle pace, expecting every moment to meet her lover; but he came not. Having taken, not the highway, but the track across the hills, she felt a little uneasy lest they might have passed each other in some glen or valley; and as the barracks with the parade-ground were already in sight, she determined to go no farther. But she had hardly reined up her horse, when the sight of troops marching from their cantonments attracted her attention; she guessed that some military business was in

hand, and that Elliot had been detained by it. Though too delicate to show herself upon the parade-ground, she resolved to ride a little nearer, partly to indulge her own wishes, by gazing even from a distance upon the form which occupied her sleeping and waking thoughts, and partly with the hope that his attention might be attracted, and hence that he might lose no time in joining her when the parade should be dismissed. With this view she put her pony to the canter, and approached the lines.

In the meanwhile she observed the battalion form into square, and a wooden machine, of a triangular shape, erected in the midst of it. All was now silence. She had ridden nearer than was her original intention, because the sight of Elliot, mounted upon his charger, immediately in rear of the troops, had blinded her to other objects; and the consequence was, that she obtained a distinct view of all that was passing. There came from a particular quarter of the buildings a guard of soldiers, conducting a man handcuffed, and in an undress, towards the battalion. This last body

had hardly entered the square, when a wild shriek, and in a woman's voice, caught her ear. A female, at the same instant, darted from one of the houses, with hair dishevelled, and her garments disordered. She held up her hands to Heaven, and falling down upon her knees before Elliot's horse, seemed to be urging some petition with all the energy of deep grief. Elliot turned away from her, and rode into the square. The woman rose, uttered another scream, and began to tear her hair; when suddenly, as it seemed, catching sight of Rose, she ran towards her. Rose trembled, she knew not why, and was stationary.

"Oh lady!" cried the woman, who was now at her side, and had fallen upon her knees,—"oh lady! surely Heaven has heard my prayer, and sent you hither. Save him, for God's sake save him, or they will tear him to pieces. I know you have only to speak the word, and it will be done." —"Save whom, my good woman?" replied Rose deeply affected. "Whom am I to save, and from what am I to save him?"—"My husband, my husband," exclaimed the unhappy woman, still kneeling. "Save him from the lash; they are

going to flog him for a fault which he never committed. No, no, I take Heaven to witness he did not; and I should have known it if he had.—Oh lady, save him! I know the Major can refuse *you* nothing; speak for him, good lady, and God will bless you for it."

Rose was quite overcome, and burst into tears. "Heaven's blessing be upon those dear eyes," exclaimed the soldier's wife, as Rose put her pony to the speed, and was making towards the square. But there was no necessity for that step. Major Elliot had seen her, and was already flying towards her. "Rose," cried he, pulling up his horse when they met, "this is no place for you. Go, my love,—go from the ground, at least now; you cannot stay to witness what must be done."—"Nay, Elliot," replied Rose, "I will not go. I beseech you not to hurt that poor woman's husband. He is innocent, indeed he is; she says so, and I am sure she is correct. Indeed, indeed, I cannot go till you promise me that he shall not be punished."

"You know not what you ask, Rose," rejoined Elliot. "Believe me, love, I am not

cruel; I would not willingly hurt a hair of his head. But the man is a criminal,—he has been found guilty; and discipline must be kept up. I would refuse you nothing, as you well know, which I could grant consistently with my honour,—and you would not have me sacrifice that?"

"No, Elliot; I would not have you sacrifice your honour, for that is dearer to me than life; but what dishonour can there be in pardoning a guilty man? Is it not the noblest use that we can make of power? Oh, Elliot! remember how much we ourselves stand in need of pardon; and as you hope to be forgiven your own sins, forgive the offences of this criminal. Look to his wife, dear Elliot, and think what I should feel were hers and my situation reversed."

"Rose, you have prevailed," answered the Major; "but, in truth, I would it had been otherwise. You have, moreover, exposed us both. Go:—I will do as you desire, and follow you." He turned his horse's head and galloped back to the square. As to Rose, her very brain swam round. She had performed a

humane action, for which her conscience approved her; but she had hurt or offended Elliot; and even an approving conscience could not compensate for that. Besides, had she not, in some degree, overstepped the bounds of female modesty, in appearing before a parade of soldiers, and openly exerting her influence over their commanding officer? Such were the thoughts which rushed into her mind, as she rode leisurely in the direction of her home. But she was not suffered to pass thus. The noise of persons running was behind her, and in a moment, both the woman and her husband were at her side. "That is the lady, Will," cried the poor wife,—"that is she that saved you. Bless her, Will,—thank her, and bless her as she deserves."—"I cannot thank you as you deserve, dear young lady," said the man; "but Heaven will reward you. Ay,—and I too may do you service. Lady, have a care of what you are doing. I have seen you often, where now I would not see you again; and have heard of you what must never again be spoken. Farewell, lady!—your goodness shall not pass unrequited;—but have a care of ——"

The soldier seemed as if he were going to give utterance to something of importance, when the speech was interrupted by the coming up of Major Elliot. "Begone, Sir!" cried the Major, addressing the man in a tone more harsh and authoritative than Rose considered at all necessary. "Begone to your quarters, and take care how you get into a scrape again. There may not always be a friend at hand to save you." The man touched the front of his foraging cap, and casting an anxious look at Rose, walked away.

"What was that fellow saying?" asked Elliot; and he asked it with a degree of agitation such as he seemed unwilling to have observed. "Nothing," replied Rose. "He only thanked me for having spoken in his favour. But he might have said something worth listening to," added she with a smile, "had you not sent him away."—"Indeed!" rejoined the Major, smiling in his turn, "and what might be the subject of his communication?"—"That I cannot tell. I only know that the last sentence was one of caution; but whether against people or things, or

witches or hobgoblins, you gave me no opportunity of discovering."—"Humph!" replied Elliot.

A considerable pause ensued in the conversation, during which Rose cast a timid glance towards her lover, and beheld with dismay an expression of violent, and, as she judged, painful anxiety upon his countenance, such as she had never seen there before. "What is the matter?" cried she, a good deal alarmed. "You are ill, Elliot, or you are offended with me for appearing, where indeed I feel that I ought not to have appeared." The anxious look departed instantly from his visage, and his old sweet smile took its place. "Not so, dear Rose," replied he. "Offended with you I cannot be; though I wish things had turned out differently. But no matter. Rose has had her way, and she is convinced there is nothing which Elliot would not do to make her happy. Let me, however, obtain one promise from you. Never act again as you acted to-day; and take no farther notice of the persons whom you have obliged. He is not a good man; she

is a bad woman; and they may impose upon you."

"I promise," answered Rose, restored once more to her accustomed composure. The remainder of their ride passed by as their rides generally passed, and Elliot spent the day at the Toll.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE ROSE OF EAST KENT.

I HAVE said that the interval of one week only now intervened between the progress of the lover's suit, and its consummation by marriage. It is probably needless to add, that each day was one of extraordinary bustle and preparation, not only among the milliners and dress-makers of Folkestone, but with Rose, and my sister likewise. The latter was, as a matter of course, chosen to do the duties of a bride's-maid. To prepare her for that important office, a suitable robe must be got ready; and when that was in a state of forwardness, her taste was to be consulted, and her needle put in requisition, to assist the bride in such parts of her equipment as she chose not to entrust to the artists in our country town. Throughout the parish, again, all was

tiptoe expectation. The old people, though they grieved at the prospect of losing the dear sweet young lady, yet rejoiced, as in duty bound, at the near approach of her wedding; affirming that she had only met with her deserts; for, in truth, had the handsome Major been a lord himself, instead of a lord's son, she would have been still too good for him. With respect to the young folks again, especially the children at the school, the feeling was one of extreme and unmixed satisfaction; partly, poor souls, because they looked forward to a day of mirth and enjoyment, and partly because they one and all loved their young mistress, and were glad because they imagined she was glad also. Such was the general feeling throughout the parish, and indeed throughout the neighbourhood. The talkative part of her own sex, it is true, whose society she had latterly avoided, did not profess that satisfaction which none of them experienced, or if they did, we heard nothing of it; but all with whom she continued to associate, whether as friends and equals, like ourselves, or as humble dependents, like the poor people in the parish, cherished but one

sentiment—that of unmixed good-will and gratification on the occasion.

Day after day passed on, and each night and morning, as it went and came, brought the nuptial hour nearer and nearer. Major Elliot was, all this while, as attentive as a lover could be. That he adored Rose, every word and gesture gave evidence; yet, strange to say, I could not help imagining, that the faster the period of interval sped on, the less easy and agreeable he became in his general manner. He would drop, at times, into a fit of musing, from which even Rose's raillery could hardly rouse him; whilst anon an expression would pass from time to time athwart his countenance, such as I loved not to behold, and which indicated a troubled spirit. For a while, I was willing to persuade myself that my own imagination had deceived me; but I soon found that the circumstances which struck me, had not been unobserved by others.

"Do you not think that Major Elliot has greatly changed of late?" said my sister to me on the evening just previous to that which was to precede the wedding. "I trust he does not repent his choice; but, in truth, he seems to

me to have become singularly dull and reserved within these few days."

"I am sorry you have noticed it," answered I "for I had hoped that my own fancy was deceiving me. Yet I know not why we should suspect evil things, because a man becomes serious on the approach of his marriage. It is a very solemn engagement; and though the Major be of age, and free from the restraint of guardians, it is very possible that his family pride may rise in arms, now that the moment of trial is at hand. However, we have seen nothing capable of seriously alarming us as to Rose's future happiness; and whilst that is the case, the wisest course we can pursue, is to keep our surmises and apprehensions to ourselves."

The gravity of manner and fits of abstraction which had alarmed us, made, it appeared, no impression whatever upon Rose. She either saw them not, or she was too much occupied by her own thoughts, to give to them any lasting consideration; for Rose, too, was moody and silent at times, as the hour of her wedding drew near. She thought of her father, the only being whom, previous to her acquaintance with Elliot,

she had really loved, with all the affectionate consideration which a dutiful daughter ever feels when about to be separated from her parent, perhaps for ever. Who would take care of him as she had done, when the fortune of war should call her, it might be, many hundred miles away from him? Doubtless it is, both to man and woman, the most blessed of all anticipations, that they are about to be united to the single being with whom they would desire to spend their lives; but to a man, generally speaking, the anticipation comes unchequered, for he has no home to abandon, and no relatives to leave behind. It is not so with a woman: she quits a home, a positive home, the dwelling-place of father or mother, or both, where a thousand little links are woven into a chain to bind down her affections, and to rivet all her wishes. On her side, therefore, there is a sacrifice to be made, which is not demanded on the part of her lover; because she severs old ties for one as yet unknown, and abandons old scenes and old associations for—she knows not what, and she scarce knows whom. No doubt, these reflections had their full weight with Rose:—be that, however,

as it may, the abstractedness of manner, and fits of gloom, which struck my sister and myself as attaching to Major Elliot, passed, on her part, as perfectly unheeded as if they had had no existence.

And now one day only stood between the wishes, not of the lovers alone, but of all their friends, and their completion. It so happened, that on that very day the family from the Vicarage had been invited to dine at the Toll. We were all assembled in the drawing-room waiting for Major Elliot, who had been some time expected. We were in the act of discussing the arrangement which the lovers had made, as to their marriage-jaunt,—some recommending the place of their own choice, the Isle of Wight; others proposing Cumberland, or North Wales, as a fit situation for spending the honey-moon, when Bligh put his head—only his head—within the door-way, and stated that 'a person in the kitchen desired to see Miss Rose.' Rose instantly prepared to obey the summons; but before she had walked half across the room, the jingling of spurs in the passage beyond foretold the approach of one whom she would not shun, and immediately

after Major Elliot entered. He seemed heated and, if my imagination deceived me not, a good deal agitated. “ Whither go you, love?” said he in a hurried tone of voice, seizing Rose by the hand, and leading her back to her chair. “ Some one has desired to see me,” replied she, smiling sweetly upon him, and gently disengaging her hand: “ I will return to you in a moment.”—“ Do not go, Rose,” cried the Major, endeavouring to be calm; “ I know who has asked for you—I saw her enter by the back-way as I came up:—it is the woman with whom you promised to hold no farther intercourse—you will not go, now.”—“ No, certainly,” answered Rose. “ Tell the woman, Bligh, that I cannot see her; but if she have any thing to communicate, desire her to send in her message by you.” Bligh retired, and the door was shut.

“ Her husband has not been in jeopardy again?” said Rose, addressing the Major. “ Not at all,” answered he. “ The man has behaved wonderfully well, considering his general character;—but I am glad you did not see her. It is more than probable that she sought to impose upon you, a second time, by some story of feigned

distress: I only wish you had desired your man to turn her out of doors at once. But let her pass.—What think you of these, dear Rose? Will they match your dress to-morrow?" So saying, the Major opened a little box which he carried in his hand, and displayed a brilliant diamond necklace and bracelets, of the value of which I cannot judge, but which, I doubt not, were worth a considerable sum of money.—"And why waste these upon me, Elliot?" said she, turning them over and admiring them all the while. "Know you not that I stand in need of no such tokens?" — "I know not what you stand in need of, Rose; but this I know, that you merit more than I can ever bestow upon you.—And here," continued he. "what say you to this?" As he concluded the latter speech, he drew from his pocket a piece of paper, which, on examination, proved to be a licence. Rose, of course, blushed, and we, as a matter equally of course, laughed. The Major's hurried manner was gone, and we were in momentary expectation of a summons to dinner,—when Bligh again entered.

"The woman would hardly be persuaded to go, Miss," said he. "I told her you were en-

gaged; and she was the more desirous of seeing you on that account. At last, when I positively assured her you would not be spoken to, she begged for pen, ink, and paper, and wrote you a note.—Here it is, Ma'am."

"Read it not, Rose," cried Elliot, starting from his chair and grasping at the bit of paper. "It is some infernal petition, some imposture, something to deceive your good-nature. Read it not." Old Bligh, however, knew his duty better than to suffer a note addressed to his mistress to pass into other hands. He shrank back from the Major's clutch, and held it tight. "Nay, Elliot," replied Rose, "this is absolute folly. You must think me no better than a child, if you believe that a single note, or any other single communication, either with the husband or the wife, must of necessity expose me to danger. But I have no desire to read it. Give it to my father, Bligh, or to Mr. Williams—he is beside you."—"Give it to me," cried the Major in a voice of thunder, "as you value your life," laying, at the same time, his hand violently on Bligh's collar. We were all, as may be imagined, thrown into the ut-

most confusion by a behaviour so extraordinary. The Commodore half rose from his seat; my sister uttered a scream; and Rose trembled excessively, the colour coming and going upon her cheek in quick succession. As to Bligh, he shook off the Major's grasp with the coolness of a veteran, and, handing the note to me, stood bolt upright between us whilst I perused it.—"Read, Mr. Williams," said Rose in a tone of womanly dignity, "and read aloud, that all may hear you. There must be something singular, indeed in that billet, to affect Major Elliot so strangely." I did read; but before I had read to an end the Major had disappeared. The letter was as follows:

"I have followed you, dear lady, far and near, for the purpose of putting you on your guard; but no opportunity of speaking has been furnished to me. Even now you will not see me. But perhaps you may read this, and if so, the kind office which you did to me and my husband will not go unrewarded. Oh, lady! beware of Major Elliot; he is a villain, and will betray you. They say you are to marry him to-morrow. Marry him not, dear lady,

for he is married already. His wife is now living in the very county where both I and my husband were bred and born."

How I contrived to read the above scrawl to a close, I know not. When it was finished, I felt as if a fit of apoplexy had come over me; —I had no power to move hand or foot. The like stupor seemed to take possession of every individual in the room; we all stood or sat motionless, as if the Arabian tale had come to pass, and we had all been changed into marble. Two seconds, perhaps, had thus passed, when our senses were suddenly and most painfully recalled. Rose, who had been standing about the centre of the apartment, dropped like one smitten by a deadly wound; not a sound or motion marked the workings of her feelings, but at once she fell flat upon the carpet. "My child, my child!" exclaimed the Captain, roused by the situation of his daughter. "My Rose, my own darling child. Help! help! run—ride—fly—bring hither the doctor. Look to her, Mr. Williams,—for God's sake, look to her! and you, Bligh, fetch me my pistols.—Oh, the villain! the cold-hearted, hypocritical villain!—Bring me my pistols, I say,—

saddle the horse, and let me follow him. I am old; but there is some vigour in this arm yet, and the scoundrel shall feel it."

It would be difficult to say which of the two, whether the old man or his daughter, attracted the greatest share of our attention, or seemed to have the greatest demand upon our sympathy. The rest of the party, as was natural, looked chiefly to Rose, and exerted every ordinary expedient to recall her to her senses. For myself, I was more eager to stay the proceedings of the Captain; for Bligh, game to the back-bone, was all for fighting, and swore, that if his master did not shoot the scoundrel, he would do it himself. "Stay, dear Sir!" cried I; "stay at least till Rose be herself again. The villain cannot escape you, if you be determined to add sin to sin. But your daughter,—what is to become of her, while you think only of avenging her wrongs? For Heaven's sake, let medical assistance be called in."—"You are right, Mr. Williams," replied the Commodore, "quite right. The scoundrel cannot escape me:—he cannot quit his regiment without leave, and I shall find him yet.—Mount, Bligh,

mount, and ride for the doctor ; I need not tell you to ride fast."—"He shall be here in a twinkling," cried Bligh; and disappeared to execute his message.

Bligh must have ridden at the rate of at least ten knots an hour; for we had hardly recalled Rose to the use of her faculties when the surgeon arrived. Having taken a little blood from her, he desired that she should be put to bed, and recommended that the utmost quietness might be preserved,—no one, not even her father, going near her for some time. To these injunctions the most prompt and ready attention was paid. Narcotics were, moreover, administered, as well as every species of soothing medicine calculated to allay the nervous irritability which she soon began to exhibit; for though, on first awaking from her trance, she seemed perfectly unconscious of past events, not many minutes elapsed ere the truth again broke in upon her. All, however, would not do. No sleep—not even a doze or broken slumber—came to her aid. She lay awake—wide, but speechlessly awake. Not a word of complaint escaped her; not a

syllable of reproach either upon herself or any other person; but ever and anon a sigh deep, deep, and distinctly audible, told how heavily the hand of affliction had fallen upon her, and how acutely she felt its weight, even in her heart of hearts. Poor Rose! I saw her no more that day, but my sister remained beside her till the morning, and the spectacle presented was, I understand, a harrowing one. You could not say that the maiden was actually deranged, neither could you affirm that her mind was under the guidance of reason. For many hours she spoke not at all; and when at length the faculty of speech returned, it exhibited itself, not in lengthened sentences, but in exclamations short and broken, and piteous to overhear. The name of Elliot passed once or twice, as it would appear, involuntarily over her lips; but she checked herself, as it were, as soon as the word was uttered, and relapsed again into profound silence.

With respect to the Captain, no words of mine can convey any adequate idea of the intense misery which the good man appeared to suffer. "The villain! the cold-blooded,

heartless villain! Oh, may God's heaviest curse, and the curse of a father, light upon him! My Rose, the prop of my old age, thus blighted! Ah! but he shall not escape me. —Bligh! I say, Bligh, put these weapons in good order, and see that the horses are saddled betimes in the morning. Oh, the scoundrel! how well these old hands will look when his base heart's blood has dyed them!" Thus raved the old man, alternately indulging in lamentations over his daughter, and invectives against her betrayer, during the remainder of the evening. Neither, in truth, was Bligh more calm.—"I thought there must be something wrong, Sir," said he, "when the lubber seemed so anxious to capture that there bit of a letter. And how came he to sheer off so safely? Well, well, Miss Rose shall not go unrevenged, if old Bligh himself be left to avenge her."

I cannot describe, I may not indeed attempt to describe, the condition of the whole family at the Toll that night. He whose hopes have been wound up to the highest pitch, and who has felt them suddenly swept away from

beneath him, as by a whirlwind, could alone enter into the description, were it even adequately given. But for the delineation of scenes such as that, human language is happily not adequate:—I say happily, because words being but the symbols of ideas, were there any words capable of placing so dark a picture before the mind's eye, the picture itself must be very frequent in real life. It is not so as yet. Long may it be till the case become different!

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE ROSE OF EAST KENT.

MY tale is drawing fast to a close, and it is a melancholy one. Day had barely dawned when Captain Wilmot, over whose head the night had dragged heavily on, set forth, attended by Bligh, in quest of the villain who had so cruelly betrayed his confidence. On that occasion the old man's strength, both of body and mind, seemed to have become supernaturally renewed. But the pursuit was fruitless. Elliot had not returned to his quarters. It afterwards appeared, that immediately on quitting the Toll, he took the road for London, from whence, having obtained permission to join the portion of his corps employed on foreign service, he embarked for the East Indies. What ultimately became of him, whether he fell by

the sword, or whether a pestilential climate carried him off, I never learned. The only intelligence respecting him, indeed, which ever reached us, was conveyed in a letter from himself to Rose. It bore date ten days posterior to the discovery of his baseness, and ran thus:—

"How or in what terms I am to address you, most beloved and most injured of women, I know not. That you will condescend to peruse these lines, knowing from whom they come, I am doubtful; and if you do peruse them, where will be the benefit? Oh, Rose, forgive me! I deserve it not,—that I feel; but you—you were ever a being of purity and mercy. Can that mercy extend even to me? It is true, that I am a villain; but not a heartless one. It is true, that but for the direct interposition of Providence in your favour, you would have been ere now betrayed and undone, and I not less miserable than I am now. I offer no excuse for all this. Even now I write solely to assure you, that, go where I will, your image shall go with me, and that——

"Rose, I never loved but one, and you are she. My marriage—for married I am—was en-

tered into as a means of extricating myself from pecuniary embarrassments; and the woman with whom the hated connexion was formed, has long ceased to be treated as my wife. You, Rose,—you only have I loved. God is my witness, that I proceeded in my villainy step by step,—that when first I saw you, I dreamed not of your ruin,—that at each visit your influence over me became greater and greater,—that I felt how worthless life would be without you; and that——

"But what am I saying? what excuse is here for conduct such as mine? Farewell, dear Rose, for ever! Your miniature is on my bosom! there it shall hang till that bosom cease to beat. To-morrow I embark for a distant land, from whence I shall never return. May you be happy! may the image of one who could have been to you all that man ever was to woman, cease to hold its place in your memory; and may another, and a more worthy lover, restore to you that peace which I have so basely taken away! For me, my house of rest is in the grave."

Rose had already quitted her bed, and was

able to appear, as formerly, in the parlour, when the preceding letter reached her. It had a powerful, but not an agonizing effect upon her feelings. She wept bitterly over it; but never, except at the moment, did she allude to its contents. The name of Elliot, indeed, soon ceased to be heard either at the Toll or the Vicarage; and to a stranger it might have seemed as if no such person had ever come amongst us. The only remembrance of him, and of the scenes connected with him, not positively set aside, was the Arab pony. That little animal, at his mistress's express desire, was still permitted to browse and play about the paddock; he was still as great a favourite as ever, and still galloped up to the gate at the sound of her voice, to receive his portion of bread from her own fair hand. But she never mounted him again. No saddle, indeed, was put upon his back, till the last scene in this sad drama had been acted.

Rose was a strong-minded and a pious girl; but she was a girl of deep and enthusiastic feeling. She complained not; and she did her best to assume that cheerfulness which was na-

tural to her, and which now she never felt. But the exertion requisite was too manifest not to be seen, and, in truth, she uniformly appeared to me, at least, in the greatest degree, an object of commiseration, when her efforts were most strenuously exerted to avoid a display of sorrow. Poor Rose! she was stricken, where wounds are generally fatal; and her wound was mortal.

For several months, strong hopes were entertained, that time and change of scene might gradually restore her to herself. Though grieved to part from friends so deserving, even for a season, I accordingly advised her father to carry her from home; to introduce her, as far as could be done, into the gay world; and if he found that scheme unsuccessful, to try foreign travel. The Captain was ill able to bear the fatigues of journeying, and, under any other circumstances, would have been absolutely indisposed to quit his own roof; but, in the present case, he hesitated not to carry the plan into execution. They departed for London. From thence, after a sojourn of a few weeks, they made a tour into Derbyshire, and they would

have extended their travels to other parts of England, had not Rose earnestly petitioned to be brought back to the scene of her early happiness. To resist these entreaties was impossible; besides that no benefit had been seen to accrue from the measures already adopted; so, having wandered about in vain during the whole of the summer, they returned, at the beginning of autumn, to the Toll.

Alas! what a change was visible in Rose! The delicate hue which was wont to tinge her cheek had given place to an alternate deep hectic flush and deadly paleness. Her fine hazel-eye was still bright and expressive; but the brightness was that which consumption never fails to create, and the expression was one of unchanging pensiveness. Of the exquisite symmetry of her form little now remained. She was no longer the lively and happy creature whose very step gave evidence of a contented spirit, and whose presence failed not to shed a ray of delight over all with whom she came in contact; but, "the ghost of what she was," she could barely contrive to crawl from her chamber to the parlour; and from thence, when the sun

shone warmly out, to a seat upon the lawn. Poor Rose! the first leaves were beginning to fall, when she returned to her paternal roof; the last were still upon the trees when she was borne to her grave.

I will not distress myself nor my reader, by pursuing in detail the melancholy narrative of Rose's illness. Enough is done when I state generally, that day by day the disease gained ground upon her, in spite of every effort which human science could suggest to oppose it. At length she could no longer quit her room. A sofa was accordingly placed beside the window, upon which, for an hour or two each day, she rested; but even this, even the removal from her bed to the couch, became too great for her; and it ceased to be done. Oh, what a glorious specimen of Christian fortitude and meekness did that girl present! When curses were on other lips, and tears in other eyes, she spoke only of forgiveness and blessings, and wept not. Now, indeed, feeling that the hand of death was on her, she scrupled not to speak of Elliot; and it was invariably as of one, whom she had loved to absolute idolatry. "Surely God will

forgive him," said she to me, when on one occasion I was preparing to administer the sacrament to her. "I say not that he was blameless; oh, no, no! but I forgive him freely—freely! Oh, most freely! and here," clasping her thin white hands together, "I pray that he may be forgiven by Him, who knoweth whereof we are made, and is not extreme to mark what is amiss." The angelic piety of the maiden was too much for me; I could only turn away my head, and burst into tears.

I had sat with her till a late hour one evening in the latter end of October, and she appeared more easy and more cheerful than usual. Our devotions being ended, we had talked, as we generally talked, partly of the unhappy cause of her illness, and partly of the children at the school, and the poor of the parish, in whose fate she was deeply interested; and I was rising to depart, when she laid her burning hand gently upon mine, and requested me to stay beside her a few moments longer. "It is a strange fancy of mine," said she; "but I wish to be carried to the grave, not as the rich are usually carried, but like the daughter of a peasant.

It has always appeared to me a foolish thing to conduct such a ceremony as a funeral, with any degree of pomp or parade. I should wish, too, that your sister, with five of my old school-fellows, would act as bearers. Will you arrange this matter for me; and let them plant a few flowers on my grave? I was ever fond of the Scotch rose in my life; and I fancy that the knowledge that such a flower was blooming over my grave would give me pleasure even in death." She smiled when she spoke, as if ashamed of her own request; but she was pleased that I neither rejected nor opposed it. —"Good night, Rose," said I; "you shall see me again early on the morrow."—"Good night," replied she; "but to that morrow no darkness shall succeed."

Except the little sentence last uttered by Rose as I was closing the door of her apartment, I could not tax my memory with any thing peculiarly solemn in our parting; yet I felt, I knew not why, a strong foreboding, that we should meet no more in this world. Neither was I afflicted at the idea; of her recovery all hope had long been laid aside; and however free

from pain consumptive patients may be in the early stages of the complaint, towards the last their sufferings are usually acute. Such had been the case with Rose. At first her decline was gradual and smooth,—her life appeared to steal away, like the sands through an hour-glass, or the waters of a quiet river; but of late she had felt the pains of dying in no ordinary degree; and hence the kindest wish of those who loved her was, that her miseries might soon terminate. I did not, indeed, pray or wish for her death, because that would have been sinful; but I laid my head upon my pillow fully satisfied, that should it please God to remove her that night, the calling of her pure spirit to Himself would be an act of mercy and love. Nor were my forebodings groundless.

We had just sat down to breakfast, in the morning after the interview last recorded, when the slow and solemn strike of the passing-bell informed us that the soul of some one had returned "to Him who gave it." Little doubt could be entertained respecting the individual whose knell was sounding. I sent, however, to the sexton to inquire, and found that it was as

we had anticipated:—Rose was at rest. When she died, no one could tell, for the nurse who sat beside her heard neither groan nor struggle; nor was it till after several seconds spent in examining, that it was ascertained how deep her slumber was. For this I failed not to return thanks; since it was evident that her death must have been as tranquil, as her life was spotless.

As may be imagined, I lost no time in repairing to the Toll, nor neglected any means which reason and religion dictated, to soothe the sorrow and support the spirits of Captain Wilmot. But what are words of comfort to a wounded spirit, whilst the wound is yet fresh? or how may we soothe the sorrows of a parent, robbed of his only child, as the Captain had been robbed of his? Alas! my best arguments fell powerless upon his seared mind. He was perfectly inconsolable; he could not listen either to reason or religion; all his hopes and wishes were with the dead.

The consequence of his absolute stupor was, that the care of all the arrangements necessary for the funeral devolved upon me. In attending

to these, I took especial care to fulfil, to their minutest letter, the wishes of the amiable deceased. I gave notice to the school children that they would be required to follow their patron to the grave; I forwarded cards of invitation to the five young ladies whom Rose had named as chief mourners, and appointed my sister to fill the place of the sixth. In a word, I left nothing undone which I conceived that Rose herself would have desired, and which tended, without producing any thing like the show or parade of which she expressed her abhorrence, to mark the esteem and respect in which her name and memory were held. In all these arrangements the Captain took no share. Day and night he was in the apartment with his daughter's corpse; and when the hour at length arrived at which it was determined to commit it to the dust, it was not without great difficulty that he could be prevailed upon to resign it to its fate.

There are few scenes more chastely or innocently affecting than the burial of a young maiden in this part of the country. The shell, instead of being muffled up in a pall, is co-

vered by a damask cloth white as the skill of the bleacher can make it; it is borne upon the shoulders of six young men, dressed in black indeed, but each wearing a white silk scarf across his shoulder, a hat-band of the same hue and materials, and a knot of white ribbons on his left breast. By the side of the coffin, arrayed wholly in white, walk the six chief mourners, generally damsels of the same, or nearly the same age with the deceased; whilst the rest follow, two and two, either dressed in robes of the like virgin colour, or having scarfs of white hung over their more sombre habiliments. Then come the children, provided, as was the case with Rose, the deceased be a person of some consequence, and, at the same time, beloved and respected by her poorer neighbours, each bearing in her hand a bunch of wild flowers, with which to strew the coffin as soon as it is lowered into the earth. Besides all which, there is in the language of the burial service itself, something affecting beyond all the formularies that have been ever compiled; especially when both he who reads and those who listen feel, that the being over whose mortal

remains it is pronounced, was not unworthy of it. Poor Rose! all these honours, both of thought and deed, attended her body to the grave, neither was there a dry eye in the churchyard during the progress of the melancholy ceremony.

To pursue my narrative farther would only be to harrow up my own feelings for no good purpose. Let me then hasten to an end. Rose was buried. The coffin was covered with heaps of flowers, which again were moistened by the tears of those that strewed them. On her grave were planted several Scotch roses, with a few violets and snow-drops; nor have the weeds ever been suffered to spring up or choke them. A stone, too, was erected to her memory; but it bears no other inscription besides the name, age, and date of the departure of her who sleeps beneath. Her virtues, however, are inscribed on the hearts of all who knew her; and the youngest member of the present generation must pass away, ere she and they are forgotten. Such was the destiny of the Rose of East Kent: a hard one, no doubt, were there no life beyond the present; but, taking the future into con-

sideration one rather to be envied than deplored.

With respect to the Captain, a very few words will suffice to satisfy the reader of his destiny. When Rose ceased to breathe, the last and only tie that bound him to this world, parted. From the day of her funeral he was scarce known to speak. He lived, indeed, about six months, apparently in his usual health; but his heart was broken. Nature at length gave way; and after a short illness, he was conveyed to the same grave with his daughter. In his will he had not been forgetful of Bligh: that faithful fellow, having no farther connection in this part of the country, returned to his native county of Devon; and had, when I last heard of him, established himself in comfortable business as an innkeeper in the town of Exeter.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE PARISH APPRENTICE.

It was on a cold, calm, frosty night, towards the end of December, the family having long retired to rest, that I drew my chair close to the fireplace in the little green parlour, placed the candles upon brackets conveniently fixed in the wall, and, taking up my favourite Homer, sat down with the intention of reading for an hour or two previous to following their example. The clock in the passage beyond had struck eleven, and silence the most unbroken was around me; for the cat, ceasing to pur, lay fast asleep upon the hearth-rug, and the fire, though bright and cheerful, emitted no noise of bickering; when, just as I was beginning to give up my attention to the images of the prince of poets, it was suddenly and some-

what disagreeably drawn away to other matters. A sound came upon me as of footsteps crimping through the snow, and drawing rapidly, yet cautiously, towards the Vicarage. By and by, I could hear the wicket-gate swing upon its hinges, and then fall back again with a slam, as if accidentally dropped from the hand of an intruder; and lastly, there was a steady tramping of feet across the paddock, which ceased only at the front entrance of the dwelling. I shut my book, not altogether free from apprehension that some evil design was in progress; and almost instinctively began to prepare for resisting its accomplishment.

I had not, however, proceeded farther in the prosecution of the latter design, than to make a grasp at the poker, as a ready weapon of defence, when a violent knocking at the outer door furnished very satisfactory evidence that there would be no occasion to remove it from its rest. Thieves and burglars seldom announce their proximity by signals calculated to rouse the family, whom they intend to plunder; and hence the first peal of the knocker served to turn my thoughts into another and a much

more rational channel. I guessed at once that some one of my parishioners was ill; that a child perhaps might be at the point of death, which had not yet received the rite of baptism; and that the person who broke thus unceremoniously upon my midnight vigils, was come to lead me to the house of mourning. I was not deceived in the former of these speculations. On demanding the business of the intruder, a voice, familiar to me as that of an old acquaintance, made answer, that Mr. Bushell, of Teamhill, was at the point of death, and that he entreated, as a particular favour, that I would come to him immediately. It is scarcely necessary to add, that I returned a prompt acquiescence to this demand; and undoing the fastenings, admitted Mr. Bushell's hind, an honest countryman considerably advanced in years, to the benefits of my fireside, whilst I myself hastened to wrap up against the weather.

Whilst thus occupied, it was impossible not to indulge in various surmises touching the cause of so unlooked for a message. John Bushell was one of the very few persons in the parish from whom I had on no occasion received

the slightest mark of attention, and who, if he never positively sought to injure, at all events took no pains to conceal, that he entertained neither for me, nor for any other member of my profession, the smallest degree of respect. Morose and sullen in his temper, stubborn and obstinate in his disposition, quarrelsome moreover, and petulant, as well as hard-hearted and griping, he was to all his neighbours an object of dislike and distrust; and either the knowledge of this fact, or something else, rendered him as averse to society as society appeared unwilling to admit him within its pale. A variety of strange stories, likewise, were afloat concerning him. He began life in very indigent circumstances, as a parish apprentice, and afterwards worked as journeyman with the village blacksmith; yet, without any visible means of making a fortune, he had long been in the occupation of one of the best farms in the county. It is true, that on the death of his master, whose only daughter he had married, the profits of the business came to him; but these were by far too moderate to account for his extraordinary rise; and hence men scrupled not to hazard a

thousand guesses and conjectures, not one of which redounded to the honour of their object. Nor was this all. Though successful, in the worldly sense of that term, to no ordinary degree, Bushell had, in every other respect, been singularly unfortunate. His wife became deranged soon after her husband took possession of Team-hill, and was now the inmate of an asylum in London; his children either died young, or grew up discreditably; whilst he himself, instead of being softened by such calamities, was stated to have acquired, as each befel, an increased degree of acrimony and ill temper. For the last dozen years, indeed, he had lived entirely by himself, taking no share whatever in parish business, and never making his appearance either at church or market. It would have been somewhat contrary to the ordinary course of events in country places, had his neighbours abstained from insinuating, that wealth acquired by improper means never brings a blessing along with it; and that the case of John Bushell, late a parish apprentice, and now the richest man among them, was one exactly in point.

Such were the thoughts which passed hastily through my mind as I buttoned my great-coat round my throat, and tied an additional handkerchief about the collar; but they led to no solution of the problem in which they began, and which they were designed perhaps to explain. The operation of wrapping up, however, being complete, I rejoined the messenger; and we set forward, at a brisk rate, towards our point of destination.

"Has your master been long ill?" said I, as we trudged along.

"He has been long in a failing way, Sir," replied my guide; "but it was only the day before yesterday that he took to his bed, or would consent to see the doctor. I doubt there is more the matter with him than all the doctors in the country will be able to cure."

"Do you mean that his case is hopeless—that he is too far gone to recover—that he must die?"

"Not exactly so," answered the man, "though I dare say he won't recover neither. But there seems to be something on his mind that I would not have upon mine for all the money that he may call his own. He is in a terrible way, Sir, as

you will see, and abuses every body that comes near him."

"How long has this been the case? and whence comes it that, in such a frame of mind, he has thought of sending for me?"

"Why he has sent for you, Sir, I really cannot tell, and I question whether he could tell it himself; for it is not two days gone since he cursed you to the housekeeper as a teacher of lies, and I don't know all what. But the prospect of death is not, I take it, very comfortable to him,—and as they say of drowning men, he is ready to catch at a straw. He has been like a madman since the doctor told him that there was little chance of his getting round; calling at one moment for you, and the very next blaspheming, till it made my hair stand on end to hear him. I always thought things were not as they should be; and now I am sure that I was not mistaken."

"To what do you allude in particular?" asked I.

"Why, to the story of the pedlar, to be sure," answered the man,—"Noah Levi, him as slept here one night about thirty years back, and has

never been heard of since. Master has spoken about him very strangely within these four-and-twenty hours, and that is an uncommon thing for him to do; because though I have lived with him ever since he came to Team-hill, I can testify that he never took the Pedlar's name between his lips afore. I fear all is not as it ought to be, and that there was more truth in some folk's guesses than some folks would allow."

There was something so appalling in the train of ideas to which my guide's last insinuation gave rise, that I involuntarily stopped short, and turned towards him. Though I had heard much to the disadvantage of the miserable man whose dying-bed I was about to visit, no such charge as seemed to be contained here was ever brought against him; at all events, the charge, if implied, had never been so expressed as to be rendered comprehensible by a comparative stranger. I had frequently been told that John Bushell was a bad man; that he came by his wealth no one knew how, though it was supposed by means which no one chose to particularize; and I had not unnaturally gathered from all this, that his violations of the laws by smuggling,

probably, or even by more acknowledged acts of dishonesty, were neither few nor trifling in extent. I had in consequence given him credit for a variety of crimes, each of them sufficient, if detected, to render him amenable to public justice; but of such an offence as that which his ploughman appeared to lay to his charge, I had not been led to suppose him capable. I therefore stared at the man in horror, and demanded, with as much abruptness as energy, what it was that he meant to say.

"God knows, Sir," said the man, likewise stopping, and, as it seemed, startled by my manner. "I do not intend to assert that the case is so. I know nothing about it more than others; but I am sure of this, that Noah Levi was a great friend of his when he used to work at old Smeltum's as journeyman; that he dealt with him a good deal like; that Noah was well known to carry about with him at all times a heap of watches and jewels; that he usually passed the night at the forge, when in these parts, for he was an honest Jew, and every body liked him; and that he came, as I was saying, one evening after Bushell succeeded to the business, as usual,

and went away, at least so it was reported, before folks were stirring in the morning; and we all know that Levi was never seen in this parish again. Now it is not I that say it, but many have said, that Levi was not fairly dealt with. Whether the case be so or not, I can't tell. I only speak as my neighbours do; but there is one above knows all."

"You have raised awful suspicions in my mind, however," replied I; "and I pray that they may be unfounded."

We now walked on in silence till, having gained the brow of the eminence which bears the name of Team-hill, we found ourselves within a few rods of Bushell's dwelling. Unwilling to enter the sick man's chamber under the influence of such an impression as had just been excited, I again halted, and looked round upon the landscape with the well-grounded hope, that the contemplation of such a scene would restore, at least in part, the composure of which our recent conversation had deprived me. The moon was high in the heavens, over the face of which not so much as a fleece of grey cloud floated; and the stars were out in

millions, glittering with the peculiar brightness which never fails to attach to them in a serene and frosty night. One sheet of brilliant snow covered the whole surface of the ground; from which there arose, from time to time, flashes, such as the diamond emits when the flame of the lamp falls on it. Hill and valley, fallow-field and meadow, all bore the same dazzling livery; whilst the few buildings visible, with the trees about the churchyard wall, the vicarage, and a cottage or two in the distance, were each of them arrayed in a garb of exquisite frost-work. The silence, again, was deep and solemn—so deep, that the breaking of the sea upon the distant beach alone interrupted it,—for there was not a breath of air stirring, and the movements and voices of living things were every where inaudible.

Having stood in profound admiration of this exquisite scene, till the effect which I had anticipated from it was fully experienced, I turned my face towards the abode of the dying man, and arrived, in a few moments, at the door of a mansion into which I had not before been invited to enter. The house belonged to that class of buildings of which, in the South of

England, so many are to be found, erected, probably, three or four centuries ago, and originally inhabited by the minor gentry, a race of which few specimens remain. The exterior presented the appearance of a confused pile of gables and buttresses, with stacks of chimneys here and there rising high above the roof, and attached to one another by iron rods; whilst the interior, with its spacious halls, huge oak staircases, and broad landing-places, told a tale of other times, when the holding of manorial courts was something of much more importance than a form.

Into such a habitation I was ushered by my guide, who, lifting the latch cautiously, led me, without speaking, through the hall into a parlour beyond; and, leaving me there, with a light burning on the table, though without any fire in the grate, departed to inform the housekeeper of my arrival.

I had sat here perhaps five or six minutes, not without an unpleasant consciousness of extreme cold, when, the door being ajar, my attention was powerfully arrested by the sound of voices proceeding, as it seemed, from a chamber above. There were evidently two speakers,

one a female, and the other a male; and the man spoke in a tone of violent agitation, accompanied manifestly by extreme weakness, if not pain. At first, I could not distinguish a word of what passed between them. I discovered indeed, from the rise and fall of their voices, that something like expostulation and remonstrance was going on; for the woman spoke low, and, as it were, beseechingly, whilst the man gave utterance to abrupt and loud exclamations; but it was not till another door had creaked on its hinges, that a syllable of what was passing could be recognized. Then, however, I heard distinctly enough; and ascertaining, as I did in an instant, that one of the interlocutors was my patient, the discovery by no means tended to reconcile me to the office which I was called on to discharge.

"I tell you, I won't see him," exclaimed the wretched man in a tone of excessive anger and fretfulness. "It is of no use—none—none whatever—I don't believe a word of it:—I never did believe, and I won't believe now. I must have been dreaming when I told you to send for him. Pack him off—bid him go back again;

I hate all parsons—all black deceivers—all dealers in lies by wholesale. I won't see him—no!" Here the unfortunate man gave way to a paroxysm of fury, blaspheming in a gross and shocking manner, and making use of expressions such as it was sufficiently painful to overhear at the moment, but which I must not so much as attempt to repeat now. But the woman, after listening to his oaths, till either the power or will to continue them failed, answered in a calm but resolute tone, by asserting that he must receive the visit.

"It can do you no harm, at all events, and possibly may do good. Hodge has been to fetch him; he has come cheerfully all across the snow at this hour, and in this cold night; and you cannot refuse to speak to one who shows so much interest in your welfare. I will not tell him to go till you have seen him; and you know what the Doctor told you, only this afternoon."

"Woman," shrieked the sick man, whilst the bed creaked under him, as if he were making an effort to rise, "I dare not see that man, any more than I dare look upon—— Don't I know

what he will talk to me about? Do I want to be assured taht there is such a thing as hell—I, —I, who have felt it these thirty years? I tell you——" I heard no more, for the woman, closing the chamber-door after her, descended the stairs, and the next moment stood beside me.

It was not without a strong exertion that I managed so far to control my feelings, as to meet the housekeeper with an air of tolerable calmness and apparent ignorance of facts. Probably she was herself too much affected by what had passed to examine my bearing with a very scrutinizing eye; at least, there was nothing in her manner to indicate a suspicion of my being at all aware of her master's state of mind. On the contrary, with a degree of tact scarcely to be expected in a person belonging to her station in society, she opened our conference by asserting, that her master was scarcely in his right senses, and that I must not be shocked or offended should he fail to receive me with the respect due to my office and character.—"The truth is, Sir," continued she, "that some terrible secret hangs upon his heart; and till that be disclosed, he will never be rightly aware

either of his own words or of his own actions; and therefore, whatever he may say to you on entering, or however he may seem to treat you, I trust that you will not leave him in displeasure." I applauded the good woman's judicious behaviour, and having faithfully promised to abide by her counsels, I motioned for her to lead the way, and followed.

We passed through a dark lobby and up a heavy oak staircase, ending in a sort of second hall, around which were five or six doors, all of them closed; nor was there any distinguishing mark by which to discover the apartment where the patient lay; but the housekeeper led straight forward, and I soon found that he occupied one at the very extremity of the vestibule. She opened the door. Still no voice or exclamation, however slight, caught the ear, though a dull fire of cinders burning drearily in the grate, pointed out that the chamber was inhabited; and a distribution of vials and glasses upon the tables and chests of drawers, gave notice that the occupant was an invalid. I now looked towards the bed. The curtains were all drawn so closely round, that it was impossible to tell by a glance, whether the

bed itself were filled or empty; indeed, it was a sound as of a stifled breathing alone; which led me to conclude, that I had not after all been ushered into the wrong chamber. But the woman who had thus far guided me in, was not backward in completing the measure, which she, more than her master, appeared to have devised. She drew back the hangings, having previously deposited her candle where the flame, without annoying, must still expose the countenance of the sick man to notice; and announcing to him that the minister of the parish was by, she immediately retired.

For some moments after she quitted the room, not a word was spoken either by Bushell or myself. I approached his bed indeed, and sat down beside him, with the determination of regulating my mode of address according to the opening which he might make; but he continued to lie as he lay when we first entered, with his face buried in the blankets, and maintained a dogged, and, as it seemed, a desperate silence. I now felt that, if any conversation was to pass at all, it must at least begin with me: and I accordingly endeavoured to lead him,

with as little violence as possible, into an interchange of something like common civilities.

" I am sorry to find you thus," said I; " but sickness is the common lot of our nature; and as it is never sent except for some wise and good end, I hope it will prove useful to you, as well as to others." Still he made no answer. " I am here," continued I, " at your request, ready and anxious to do for you all the kindness in my power. If there be any way in which I can serve you, you have but to speak, and it shall be done."

A sort of waving of the bed-clothes followed this address, which led me to hope that it had not been without its effect; but, whatever the feeling might be under which the unfortunate man laboured, it soon passed away, and things resumed their old appearance. I next determined to try another method with him. " Mr. Bushell," said I, " this is no time for flattery, or for seeking to deceive either you or myself. If what I hear be true, your days are, in all probability, numbered; and I beseech you, by all your hopes, not here, but hereafter, to make the best use of them."

In a moment the sheet, which had hitherto covered the sick man's head, was cast aside. He raised himself by a convulsive effort upon his elbow, and casting upon me a look of desperate irony and defiance, exclaimed, "My hopes!—my hopes hereafter!—What are they?—what should they be?—but that there is no hereafter. I tell you there *is* no hereafter.—I will not believe that there is a hereafter. When we die, we die, and there is an end of us."

"No rational being thinks so," answered I; "and you, I am sure, are not so devoid of reason as to believe what you have just professed. You know better. You know that there *is* an hereafter, where all that has been done here shall be exposed and treated as it deserves."

"Did I not say so?" exclaimed the unhappy man, falling back upon his pillow. "Did I not tell her, that you would come only to torment me; that I should hear of nothing from you but of hell, and misery eternal?—What right have you," continued he, again striving to rise,—"what right have you to break in upon my repose with such fables as these? I tell you to go; I do not want to hear them. If they be

true, I shall know it too soon; but they are false,—false as that hell of which you babble."

"Nay," replied I in a tone as mild as my feelings would permit me to employ, "I should be very sorry to draw for you, or for any man, pictures of an eternity of torments only. There is a far brighter prospect before us than this; there is an eternity of honour and happiness, the doors of which are not, as far as I am aware, shut against any sinner, provided he be penitent. But I need not add, that these doors cannot be opened to the hardened, the obdurate, or the despairing. Surely you would not refuse to listen to the voice of one who would speak to you of such an eternity as this?"

A heavy groan was the only reply which the sick man made to my address. It satisfied me, however, that the address itself was understood, and it prompted me to go on in a strain which appeared likely to awaken something like a spark of good feeling in a bosom which had too long been a stranger to any besides the darkest passions. I spoke much of the goodness and long-suffering of the Creator; I argued vehemently against the folly, not less than the wick-

edness, of distrusting His mercy; and I flattered myself, from the continued silence of the patient, that my reasoning would not fail in the end of producing the effect which I desired it to produce. But my hopes, somewhat rashly formed, were not destined to a very protracted existence. "I will hear no more!" shrieked Bushell, interrupting me in the midst of my exhortations. "What have I to do with all this? What are the goodness and mercy of the Creator to me?—Look there—there—in that corner of the room," pointing at the same time franticly to a spot over which the shadow fell heavily. "Do you not see them? ha! they are smiling at me—mocking me—threatening me, as if they would say that *I* can have no share in the goodness of which you talk. See, see, they come towards me!—Oh God! keep them off, keep them off!" So saying, the wretched man once more buried his head under the bed-clothes, and all my efforts to secure his attention again, were fruitless.

I sat with him that night some two hours, during the whole of which period he continued perfectly motionless. No exertions

either of mine or of his nurse, whom in the end I called in, were sufficient to rouse him, and I quitted him at last, very little cheered, either with the recollections of the past, or expectations of the future. But the ice being broken, I determined to omit no opportunity of striving to bring him back to a proper frame; and I consequently made a point of seeing him at least once every day during a space of rather more than three weeks. At first these were, like my nocturnal visit, as useless to him as they were unsatisfactory to myself; but in the end, a constant repetition of truths, too solemn to be listtened to with indifference, had its effect. The miserable man gradually laid aside his desperation of manner. He spoke, indeed, to the last, like one who laboured under the extreme of terror; but he ceased to give utterance to blasphemies; and he eventually unburthened his overloaded conscience, by making a full confession of his crimes.

# CHAPTER XVI.

## THE PARISH APPRENTICE.

JOHN BUSHELL, the natural son of a woman of depraved habits, first saw the light in one of those abodes of profligacy and wretchedness, a union workhouse. His mother dying soon after his birth, and before an opportunity was afforded of taking an oath of affiliation, the little orphan became dependent for support upon the parish officers, who maintained him, with other paupers, in the place where he was born, and, as a matter of course, gave up the care of his education to strangers. It very seldom happens that persons circumstanced as the masters of workhouses are, find it either convenient or practicable to pay much attention to the moral training of children. There is occupation enough for them in striving to

maintain something like the appearance of order, among the crowd of idle and debased wretches who, in addition to the aged and infirm, usually make up their families; and hence the young people are, for the most part, left to form a character for themselves, after such models as may be placed most prominently before them. The consequence is, that, in nine cases out of ten, a child reared in a workhouse proves, when he attains to manhood, both idle and wicked. It is early instilled into him, by those with whom he associates, that to make the slightest effort to procure a livelihood for himself, were an act of extreme simplicity and folly; whilst the examples before his eyes are almost invariably of vices the most disgusting and the most gratuitous. To the full influence of such a training was the boyhood of Bushell exposed; and the tenor of his maturer years was, in some respects, not such as to do injustice to his early education.

It is contended by many accurate investigators of that most inexplicable of all riddles, human nature, that there are no persons living who are not, and have not always been, in a

greater or less degree, the slaves of some one master passion. Whether there be any truth in the theory, I take it not upon me to determine; but nothing can be more indisputable than that we do see, every day, the most powerful bias in men's minds towards things and objects for which it is difficult to conceive how they could have ever acquired a predilection. Perhaps there never lived a more memorable instance of this anomaly in the order of things, than John Bushell. A parish pauper, brought up among persons who either never earned a penny, or spent it, as soon as procured, in low debauchery, the child's faculties no sooner began to develope themselves than he exhibited the most determined disposition to accumulate; hoarding up every thing of value which came within his reach, and pilfering, not to enjoy a passing pleasure, but to hide the article stolen where no eye besides his own might see it. Young Bushell was not, indeed, backward in learning the other lessons which his situation spread out before him. He could swear as round an oath as any individual within the walls; he set truth boldly at defiance whenever

it suited his own purposes to do so; but not all the exertions of those about him succeeded in imbuing him with the true spirit of a pauper, —that of squandering away, with a free hand, his own means, and looking to the parish for the support which our laws compel it to afford. On the contrary, his saving propensity grew every day more and more strong; at first, to the amusement, and latterly, to the annoyance of the ribald set about him; till in the end it attracted the notice of his superiors, who admired it in proportion to the infrequency of its occurrence.

I have said, that the boy's instinct of hoarding led him, on all favourable opportunities, to appropriate to his own use such articles of value as fell within his reach. Pieces of bread and cheese, trifling bits of clothing, occasionally a penny, a knife, and even a button, were found to have disappeared, no-one knew how; yet such was the cunning of the young thief, that he either escaped suspicion altogether, or, if suspected, he managed to avoid detection. But it was not to such proceedings only that the love of gain impelled him. He was ready

to perform any office, to undertake any task, to run on any message, provided a pecuniary reward were promised; indeed, he became marked before long as a lad of an exceedingly industrious turn, whom it was a pity not to treat with more attention than was generally wasted upon parish boys. The result was, that his master took him by the hand. He was taught to read and write, and he made rapid progress in both accomplishments; he was sent out to keep cows in spring-time, and to tend pigs in autumn; and as he always received a portion of the hire paid for his services, no lad could be more attentive or more zealous. In a word, John Bushell having discovered that the readiest way of indulging his ruling propensity was to acquire habits of regularity and industry, applied himself diligently to whatever occupation his superiors chose to chalk out for him; and he became, in consequence, an especial favourite with the leading men of his parish. Nor was this all. John Bushell possessed the happy knack of accommodating himself, with perfect ease, to the humours of those about him. With his fellow-paupers he was a blusterer and a

blasphemer, taking care however, even among them, not to speak evil of dignities; whilst with his superiors, he was gentle and docile, mean, abject, and servile. Thus, whilst the former esteemed him no bad fellow after all, though abominably stingy, the latter regarded him as one of the most discreet and well-behaved youths in the house.

At the age of thirteen, a new scene opened upon Bushell, by his being bound apprentice to Jacob Smeltum, a man well to do in the world, and the only blacksmith in the parish. As the boy's character for industry and discretion stood high, his master, a good-humoured, though a somewhat careful person, readily received him into his family, where he was treated in all respects as if he had been a son; and, for some time, it is but justice to say that his behaviour was such as to merit that treatment. Early and late he was at work; quick and ready in receiving impressions, he soon made himself master of the several niceties in his trade; of as many, at least, as were known to Jacob himself; whilst his sobriety and steadiness were such as to call

forth the highest commendation from his superior. It is true that he did not always decline a treat, provided it were pressed upon him. He would occasionally accompany a friend to the public-house, and drink a pot, or it might be two, at his friend's expense; but then he never spent his own money in liquor, and never neglected business for amusement. On these several accounts, John Bushell was universally esteemed a sort of pattern to the youth of the place; and more than one old man ventured to predict, that the parish-boy might yet be as good a man as any of them.

It may appear surprising, but it is nevertheless perfectly true, that during the whole seven years which he served as apprentice to Smeltum, Bushell carefully abstained from appropriating to his own use any article of his master's property, after which he apprehended that a search might be made. Many a pang it cost him, when he saw the tea-cup with its silver load standing upon the shelf, or beheld the old man pour his week's savings into a leathern bag, and deposit it in an open

drawer; yet, though frequent opportunities of plundering both presented themselves, with a degree of resolution hardly to be expected, he permitted them to pass unimproved. The fact however is, that John was not more covetous than he was shrewd and calculating. His master had one child, a daughter, extremely ugly, no doubt, and ten full years older than himself; but John soon began to cast towards her amatory glances; and he was made happy by discovering, that the nymph was not disposed to treat them with disdain. Under such circumstances, John knew well that his interests would be best served by acting towards his intended father-in-law with apparent integrity; whilst he flattered himself that it mattered very little whether these alluring treasures should pass into his possession now, or be held back from him for a few years only. Thus reasoning, he took especial care that no temptation, however urgent, should draw him into the commission of an act of flagrant theft. As to petty peculations, in these he indulged without scruple. Bits of iron were from time to time missing, and even a set of horse-shoes

once or twice disappeared, no one could tell how; but then honest John, who had every thing within his power, could not possibly be to blame; because, if he chose to steal at all, it was extremely improbable that he would not steal to a much larger amount.

But though thus scrupulous with regard to his master, John seems not to have proved equally abstemious in his dealings with other people. Once or twice, he was detected in seeking payment of a bill already settled; and though he excused himself by asserting that it was a mistake on the part of his employer, a somewhat awkward impression remained behind, that he was scarcely to be trusted. In like manner, it was insinuated that he not unfrequently charged more for work done, than his master received; whilst the materials of which iron utensils were made, began, soon after he applied to the business, to be less enduring and less solid than formerly. Again, it was noticed, that in the event of his being sent for to perform a job in the houses of the neighbours, little valuables were apt unaccountably to disappear, —such as a tea-spoon, should it be left care-

lessly in the way, or an apron, or a pocket-handkerchief. Yet nothing had ever been so thoroughly brought home to him as to authorize the use of legal means, even in making a search; and his reputation at home was so firmly established, that there no insinuation against him could be received.

At the period of which I am now writing, it is well known that the class of wandering pedlars was much more numerous in all parts of England, than it is now. Our villages, and even our smaller towns, had not then their jewellers' and silversmiths' shops,—where brooches, rings, necklaces, and other gauds, are daily suspended before the admiring eyes of rustic beaux and belles; but such as desired to decorate either their own persons, or the persons of those equally dear to them, were indebted for the means to a set of itinerant dealers in glittering commodities. The parish of St. Alphage was not without its wayfaring merchant, whose visits might as faithfully be calculated upon as the return of spring and autumn. Regularly as Lady-day and Michaelmas came round, when the farm-servants re-

ceiving their wages, were supposed to be in a trim for making bargains, Noah Levi, a descendant of the chosen stock, made his appearance in the valley; and as he was of a facetious and merry humour, his arrival was looked to, not merely with an eye to business, but as a sure source of fun and amusement. Noah spoke English indifferently—a circumstance which enabled many a clodhopper to crack a joke at his expense. Noah's temper was placid as the sea in a dead calm; therefore there was small risk of his resenting the joke, however rude; besides, he was of a diminutive stature and a feeble make, and hence could scarcely be an object of dread even to a stripling. But Noah was more than all this: he knew every thing that was passing in the neighbourhood; he was familiarly acquainted with the peccadilloes of all the people, high and low, rich and poor, within the circle of several miles; he retailed them wherever he went, with infinite effect, and having a ready wit, he was never at loss to invent, as often as materials for an interesting piece of scandal were wanting. Then, again, Noah was a right merry fellow with the

girls. He carried about with him an admirable assortment of beads, red, blue, and yellow; he knew to a tittle which was the most becoming for every complexion; and he possessed the happy talent of persuading the simple maiden before whom he displayed them, that such a necklace only was required to set her off to the best advantage. Besides, his needles were the sharpest; his thread, the most enduring; and his thimbles, by many degrees, the best that were ever manufactured; and there was not a woman of whatever age or station in the place, that was not prepared to swear as much. On all these accounts, and others too numerous to be mentioned, Noah Levi was a welcome guest at every house in the parish; and seldom quitted it without carrying away with him a considerable share of the petty savings of its younger inmates.

Whence it came about I never could accurately learn, but Noah was nowhere received with greater hospitality than in the abode of Jacob Smeltum. Perhaps there was a kindred-spirit between the two men; or, which is more probable, perhaps Miss Smeltum, being

little indebted to Nature, was forward in seeking from art those charms of which she was ambitious; and as she was an only child, and her mother long dead, she was rarely crossed in the indulgence of a moderate inclination. Be this, however, as it may, not only was the smith's shop Noah's favourite resort by day, but a rug was usually furnished him on which to sleep in the kitchen at night; an accommodation which the honest Jew very liberally compensated, by an occasional present of a gilt ring or a glass brooch to the young lady; whilst he repaid her father for his crust of bread and cheese and mug of ale in the evening, by retailing his best stories in his liveliest strain. Thus were all parties satisfied; and the Jew escaped, what to him was no common grievance, the necessity of either running up a bill at the village inn, or resting his person, and his valuable pack, in an open outhouse.

It chanced that John Bushell had been just long enough in his master's service to impress the latter with a favourable opinion of his industry and good conduct, when the lively Is-

raelite arrived, according to custom, to dispose of his autumnal goods in the Vale. Noah was by this time somewhat stricken in years, that is to say, his hair had become grizzled; his eye, though still sharp and twinkling, required, as often as a minute object came to be examined, the aid of spectacles; and a considerable stoop seemed to denote, that a load of sixty or sixty-five summers lay upon his back. But his complexion, still fresh and rosy, with a brisk gait, and a voice clear and unbroken, pointed him out as one who bore his burthen well; and the keenness with which he drove a bargain, furnished very satisfactory proof that his mental faculties, of whatever order they might be, were not impaired. It was remarked as a curious event, that though the apprentice had barely turned fourteen, the old man and he drew at once together as if they had been of the same standing. There was no bandying of jests between them; no sarcasms on the part of the Christian, nor any retorts wrung from the Jew; on the contrary, their conversation was grave, sedate, and, as it seemed, confidential; and Smeltum, who entertained a high opinion of

the penetration of his Israelitish guest, received, in consequence, additional assurances that his apprentice would do him justice.

Years passed; and John Bushell grew up to be a man of great personal strength, and a not unpleasing exterior. As has been stated, he early began to treat his young mistress with marked respect; and the fair Cyclops, regardless of the lowliness of his origin, was far from turning to his addresses an inattentive ear. To the old man himself, indeed, not a hint was dropped of the growing attachment, which, to say the truth, was on the swain's part under admirable control; but love, in low as well as in high life, is always the most enduring when difficulties appear to stand in the way of its accomplishment; and the nymph continued constant in spite of the chilling influence of hope deferred. At last, the time of his apprenticeship expired, and, at the inamorata's suggestion, it was resolved to hazard an application for the paternal sanction upon their union. A direct refusal was the consequence. Not that Jacob Smeltum estimated at a pin's value the fact of his proposed son-in-law having been bred up in

workhouse. Had there been any substance to compensate for that, any money or land, the pauper-boy would have been admitted into his family as readily as the scion of a nobler stock; but Bushell, though a steady lad, was not, the smith asserted, worth a doit; and he had not scraped together his little fortune to waste it upon a beggar. He was accordingly dismissed from the family; and though he continued to work as journeyman, at daily wages, he was desired to find board and lodging for himself elsewhere.

The effect produced upon the young man's temper by this change in his circumstances, was very striking. Hitherto he had been supple and complying, ready to oblige, wherever interest came not in the way, and cringing towards all who appeared to him in better circumstances than his own: he became, from the moment of his expulsion from the blacksmith's house, in every respect an altered man. Morose, sulky, and ill-humoured, he avoided all intercourse, and, as far as could be, all conversation with those about him; and, though he still worked hard, it was evident that he worked with much less

of avidity and readiness than before. It is unnecessary to say, that nobody gave him credit for any other feeling besides that of disappointed avarice. He had set his heart on succeeding to his master's wealth and his master's business; and being frustrated in these objects, his chagrin became violent in proportion to the degree of certainty which he had previously indulged. Yet his penurious disposition hindered him from running the risk of looking elsewhere for employment, and he accordingly continued where he was.

But his avarice, though excessive, was not the only motive which urged him to pursue this line of conduct:—he thirsted for revenge; and that thirst became the more violent, in proportion as he found himself exposed to the sneers and ridicule of his fellow-parishioners.

I have alluded to the strong attachment which subsisted between John Bushell and Noah Levi, the pedlar; and I have spoken of it, as the good people of the place were in the habit of doing, as something quite inexplicable. The fact however is, that the two men drew together because their dispositions generally accorded;

and they became bosom-friends, because the one found in the other a ready instrument for the furtherance of his own views. Levi, though esteemed honest, and, for the most part, sufficiently circumspect to keep up the appearance of honesty, was as determined a scoundrel as ever bore wallet, or palmed off a string of paste-beads for pearls of price. Though he seldom committed a theft himself, he was always ready to purchase whatever might be offered for sale, without asking questions as to the source from whence it came; and he could advance suggestions, and drop hints, wherever his penetration caused him to discover that they were not likely to be thrown away upon dull ears. A single interview served to convince him that John Bushell might be rendered an efficient partner in the conduct of his more private business. He saw that the lad was greedy of gain, and destitute of all principle; and he set himself industriously to the task of rendering him an expert and cautious rogue,—a task which the natural aptitude of the pupil to receive such instruction, rendered exceedingly light. This it was which occasioned that intimacy between

them, at which the ignorant villagers wondered; and the results arising out of it were at once more numerous and more important than either party perhaps anticipated.

Among other schemes to which this worthy pair gave their attention, was that of making themselves masters of the entire property of Bushell's master. It was frequently debated between them, whether a robbery might not be effected; and nothing except the excessive prudence of the younger villain hindered the attempt, at least, from being made. But, boy as he was, Bushell saw plainly enough that the advantages to himself would be greater, as the risk would be infinitely less, could he contrive to win the hand of his master's daughter, than if he were to act as the Israelite advised; and hence he could never be persuaded to share with another the booty which he hoped, eventually, to appropriate to his own use. Hence, and hence only was the old smith spared; whilst in other quarters,—in Folkstone, and the country-places round,—a system of plunder was carried on, more daring, yet more systematic, than ever perhaps eluded detection.

In this state things continued; Bushell depositing his spoil, during the intervals between the Jew's visits, in a hole which he had dug under the great anvil, from whence, as often as Noah arrived, it was removed and duly purchased, till the unfortunate issue of his suit, by causing a complete revolution in his circumstances and prospects, gave to his views, touching Jacob Smeltum, a new direction. He still coveted, not merely the property immediately within reach, but the house, the shop, and the business; and as he looked upon the old man as constituting the sole obstacle to the gratification of his wishes, he began to hate him with no common hatred. He felt likewise, or endeavoured to feel, that a glaring wrong had been put upon himself. He reasoned on the subject of his long and faithful services; recalled the numerous opportunities which had offered, and been neglected, when he might have wronged his master to his own profit, without much risk of detection; and he did not hesitate to affirm, that his industry and his skill were the main causes why the business continued so flourishing. In few words, he looked upon himself as justly

entitled to the heirship of a fortune which he considered that he had been largely instrumental in amassing; and cursed old Jacob in his heart, as an ungrateful and bad man, whom it were no evil act to reward according to his deserts.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE PARISH APPRENTICE.

SUCH was the state of Bushell's feelings, which rumours of a projected union between his Dulcinea and a young farmer tended greatly to inflame, when Noah Levi made his periodical appearance in the neighbourhood of St. Alphage. The Jew professed to be greatly surprised at the change which had occurred in his friend's situation. He had left him, six months before, an inmate in Smeltum's family, full of confidence as to the accomplishment of his own wishes, and well disposed to continue the partnership which had so long existed between them: he found him now a lodger in a poor man's cottage, and, as rumour went, an altered man in all his habits and dispositions. Yet Noah was far from being displeased at this, inasmuch as he guessed that the sole motive which had heretofore swayed him

in treating his master with lenity, would no longer possess weight; and, eager to take advantage of this circumstance, he prepared once more to sound him on his readiness to aid in a plan which should promise both profit and revenge.

It was on an October evening, when the work of the day was done, and Bushell, with slow and sulky step, bent his course homeward, that the broad outline of a human figure stooping under a pack, and no less, as it seemed, under the weight of years, presented itself between him and the western horizon. Though the sun had set some time, and twilight was closing fast, Bushell found no difficulty in recognizing the gait of his associate in crime; and feeling, he scarcely knew why, an unconquerable disinclination to greet him, he pushed forward with the design of escaping a salutation.

In this attempt, however, he was not successful. The forge, with the house adjacent, standing upon the side of the road, at a point where it makes a turn to the right in order to descend the hill, the Jew was enabled, by cutting across

the meadow, to intercept his friend's movement; and he came upon Bushell just as the other had begun to congratulate himself on eluding an interview of which he was not solicitous.

"Whider so fast, friend Jan?" said the Israelite in his indistinct jargon. "Late abroad —late abroad, I tink. What will de shmight say to such hours?"

"What is that to me?" answered Bushell roughly. "What control has the shmight, as you call him, over my time? My hours are my own, and I may use them as I please."

"Hoity, toity!" exclaimed Noah with affected surprise; "is de man bewitched, or hash de evil spirit from King Shaul come upon him? Sure Meesh Shmeltum will not look favourably upon so hasty a temper."

"Fool!" cried Bushell angrily, "why prate to me about her? Don't you know as well as I how the case stands? Don't you know that the old scoundrel has broken with me entirely, and that all my finely-spun web has been tangled and confused? What a block-

head was I not long ago to follow your advice, crafty as your advice always is! But, by Heavens! he shall pay for it yet."

"Mine dear friend," said Noah, approaching his companion with a soothing and insinuating air, "I vash not ignorant of de great injury put upon you, and it vash vid de plain poorpose of convershing about de besht means of taking revenge, that I watched you on your way homewards. I heard all about it from de peoples, who jeer and make game of you every wheres. Dey shay—'Ah! de parish-boy forget himself: he rightly sarved by ould Jacob —ould Jacob too knowing for him!"'

"Ten thousand devils!" exclaimed Bushell. —"What would you tempt me to do? I know you well: I know that you propose nothing from which you yourself don't expect to reap the main advantage; but, tell me only how I may punish the old beast for his ingratitude, and I will be guided by you."

"What tink you of de job now?" whispered the Jew. "If de girl can't be had, can't we secure de swag?"

"What! break into the fellow's house, and

get myself hanged for burglary. You forget that the door is closed upon me every night, and that it is not opened again until the morning. That plan won't answer, were it even to my mind,—but it is not. I want revenge as much as I want money."

"Why den, marry de girl at once, and persuade de fader to agree afterwards."

"And be saddled with a d——d old one-eyed wench, without a sixpence to bless herself withal. You give sage counsel this evening, friend Noah, and one worth attending to."

"Nay, but might not de fader die—die suddenly, you know, before a new will could be made, or de property oderwise disposed of? might not——'

"Wretch!" replied Bushell in a harsh but a subdued tone. "I understand you; I see what you are at; and, by Heavens! the thought has more than once crossed my own mind already; but it required some living fiend, like yourself, to bring it to a bearing. You would murder the old man,—make away with him;—is that your proposal?"

The Jew nodded.

"But if I were disposed to come into this arrangement, how could the thing be done?"

"I tink I could manage dat, for a proper consideration."

"Nay, but if done at all, it must be done immediately. I don't mean to tie myself to the daughter till the father shall be fairly out of the way; and then, you know, I step at once into possession."

"Ver true, ver true," rejoined the Israelite. "It wash a goot house, a goot business; plenty of monish; goot farniture;—a very comfortable setting down for a man brought up in a workhoush."

"Devil! do you throw that in my teeth likewise?"

"No, no, friend Jan; I shpeak not in malice, but in goot-will. I only shay dat de whole establishment vash handsome."

"Well, but the means,—the means of getting rid of ould Jacob."

"Oh yesh, de means. Poor Noah ish to run all de risk, to lay all de plans, and to receive noting but tanks. De sons of Abraham don't do business so."

"Why, won't my house always be open to you as before? and have not I done you service enough, to entitle me to look for some service in return?—Have you forgotten how many guineas you have turned, out of the contents of the old anvil?"

"All ver true," replied the imperturbable Jew; "but de housh is open to me now; and what better shall it be if it only change its mashter? And ash to de guineas, truly Mashter Bushell, dey have been pretty fairly divided between ush.—I can give no help on such terms."

"What then do you expect? Will the ready chink, the contents of the old tea-cup, satisfy you?"

"No; I will have half of de whole, or I take no part in de matter."

"Half of the whole!" exclaimed Bushell. "Why you avaricious land-shark! am I to put my neck within the noose, for the purpose of enriching you?"

"Nay, dere will be two necks in de noose; and when de risk is equal, de profit ought to be equal also. Den dere ish revenge. I tought

he had insulted you so crossly, dat for dat only he deserved to die."

Bushell was silent for some moments, and the Jew was too wary to break in upon his meditations. They were manifestly not of the most agreeable kind, for, even amid the increasing gloom, the Pedlar could see that his features were violently distorted; whilst his limbs moved, as it appeared, involuntarily, like those of a horse when he is suddenly checked at speed. The two men were at this time standing about the centre of a glen or gorge, surrounded on all sides by bare green hills. It was a wild and desolate spot, admirably in keeping with the sort of conference which they held; and so far well adapted even to their purposes, that no eves-dropper could by possibility overhear them. At last the younger of the two ruffians seemed to have made up his mind.

"You shall have it your own way," said he, "upon one condition; which is, that you do the deed; and then I can rest assured that you will never split."

"And what security will be given to me dat you don't split, Mashter Bushell?—Nay, nay, if

we share de guilt, let us share de danger, and den de share of de booty comes more fairly. Besides, I am too old; I could not do de work as it must be done, without you to back me."

Bushell drew a long breath; after which he demanded to be informed of the mode by which the foul deed should be perpetrated.

"Our great business musht be," said Noah with the most perfect self-possession, "to dispatch him so dat no marks of violence appear on his person. Poison would do dis, doubtless; but den comes the cursed Doctor, who opens de carrion and finds de entrails inflamed, and de stomach injured. Next, dere is strict inquiry at every chemist's shop, as to who bought such and such a drug; and lastly, comes de officer, who claps poor Noah Levi, and honest John Bushell, in the bilboes. De cord won't do neider, for it leaves an ugly mark; and as to rolling him over de cliff, dat might be seen, and we lose our end. But dere is a method, as sure as it is hard to detect.—What say you? Can you be at the back-door to-night, a little after midnight? I will open it, and once in the ould shmight's chamber, it is all over wid him."

Bushell, after a moment's pause, consented to this proposition; upon which the Jew, placing his mouth close to the young man's ear, whispered for some moments a secret apparently too horrible to be spoken aloud. His companion stood breathless and with lips apart, till the tempter ceased, and then staggered back a pace or two, like a man smitten by a sudden wound.

"What!" exclaimed Noah in a tone of irony, "afraid,—afraid of a few words, and disposed to forego wealth, a wife, and, more than all, revenge! Is this my trusty helpmate in so many adventures?"

"Man or devil! for which you are I cannot tell," answered Bushell, "I am not afraid; I shudder only because I believe that I am now in conversation with the blackest spirit that exists beyond the pit. Who are you? and how comes it that you possess so extraordinary an influence over me?"

"Poor Noah, de Jew pedlar," replied his companion in a voice of renewed submission,—"poor Noah Levi, who tries to turn an honest penny, by shelling the best bargains that are to

be bought, and is alwaysh ready to sarve a friend. But it is time that we part. Goot night, Mashter Bushell; I vill expect you about ten minutes after midnight."

The Jew fell off from Bushell's side as he spoke, and was almost immediately concealed from observation by a bend in the valley.

It were no easy matter to describe the state of mind in which the young man continued his walk homeward. Of many crimes he had already been guilty; and his love of money increased upon him so fast, there was scarcely any which he was not prepared to commit, provided its commission promised only to put a few pounds in his pocket. But to the idea of taking away life he had not yet sufficiently habituated himself, to permit his looking forward to such a scene as the Jew had described, without horror. True, a loose and undefined consideration, that such a thing might be done—perhaps that it ought to be done—had of late repeatedly flashed across his mind. He had wished old Smeltum out of the way so frequently, that it was scarcely possible to avoid conjuring up an image of the mode by which so desirable an

end might be effected; but till to-night, no connected or digested scheme had been presented to him; and hence the occurrence was regarded rather as a thing within the limits of possible attainment, than as absolutely determined upon. Now he found himself on the very brink, as it were, of a tremendous precipice. He had pledged himself at least to assist in the performance of a deed which, his feelings even now told him, could never be forgotten; and he saw that his whole future destiny hung evenly balanced, for good or for evil. Nevertheless, there was a juggling fiend within, which strongly urged him by no means to retract from the pledge which he had given. "The Jew assures me," said he to himself, "that of detection there is not the shadow of risk; why then should I hesitate? Will not this single act put me in possession of independence? Don't I know that the old fellow is rich?—am I not certain that his riches will come to me?—and has he not wronged me? Away with coward misgiving! I will be true to thee, Noah, as the steel is true to the flint; and if I do not contrive in the end to baffle thee of thy

portion, then am I less knowing in such matters than I have hitherto supposed." He reached the door of the cottage where he lodged, just as he had arrived at this most Christian determination, and passing hastily to his own room, made a show of eating his frugal supper, and threw himself upon the bed.

In the meanwhile the pedlar, who had not yet visited his old friend Smeltum, proceeded with a quick step towards the forge, and being immediately recognised, received, as he was accustomed to do, a hearty welcome. An additional log was cast upon the kitchen fire; and Martha, anticipating the usual reward of her father's hospitality and her own attentions, made haste to arrange the supper-table in its customary order. A Dutch cheese, flanked on the one side by a huge brown loaf, and on the other by a mug of foaming ale, presented to the eyes of the hungry traveller a pleasant picture; and glad was he when the smith, cutting off a capacious slice, laid it on a plate, and pushed it towards him. Noah ate voraciously, as he always did when the means of so doing were furnished gratis; and his attention to the liquor

was not less profound than to the more substantial portions of the repast.

"Why, thou beest sharp set, friend Noah!" said Smeltum laughing, as for the last twenty years he had laughed at the Jew's peculiar manner of eating. "I wouldn't be a rasher of bacon in thy way now, were there nobody by to watch proceedings. But never mind, pedlar, eat on, and drink thy fill,—thou beest heartily welcome."

"Tank thee, Mashter Smeltum," replied the Jew, in accents soft and oily. "If all Jews and all Christians were like thee, de poor would never go widout bread, nor de weary widout a place to rest upon. But what matters Jew or Christian? we are all de same flesh and blood. —Ah! Miss Martha," continued he, turning to the one-eyed hostess, "what can I shell thee to-night? Plenty of brooches all goold, pure virgin goold, as fair as thyself! there is a necklace too for thee, every single pearl worth the whole sum thou shalt have it for. Bless thy little heart! let me hang it round thy neck, that we may see how well it becomes thee."

This speech was followed by the production

of the necklace, which Martha admired more ardently than her father admired its price; and a scene of chaffering and bargain-driving ensued, of which it is not necessary to give any account. Strange to say, however, it ended in the Jew presenting the paste-beads to the young woman, in testimony, as he himself asserted, of his sense of her and the smith's kindness; and a feeling in his favour was instantly excited even warmer than before. Not only was the beer-can replenished, but a gin-bottle was produced, out of which Smeltum brewed for himself a tumbler of potent grog; and the Israelite being invited to follow the example, a night of conviviality and hard-drinking began. Such was precisely the end which the wily pedlar desired to effect. He told his best stories with more than his accustomed humour; his stock of anecdotes and scandal seemed to be exhaustless; and the smith's liberality became greater and greater, as the liquor which he swallowed took effect. Finally, after some half dozen glasses had been emptied, four of them falling to the share of the host, the latter dropped from his stool, and was conveyed, in a state of utter

intoxication, by Martha and the Jew, to his chamber.

So far every thing had succeeded according to the pedlar's most sanguine anticipations. His intended victim was in a condition which at once rendered him powerless of resistance, and presented a fair opening to such as should attribute his sudden death to natural causes; whilst the friendly terms on which they parted would, under any circumstances, shield him from the suspicion of having offered violence to so kind a host. He accordingly saw Martha retire for the night, after spreading his pallet, as usual, upon the floor, with the savage exultation of a tiger watching its prey, and addressed himself, not as may be supposed, to sleep, but to watch impatiently for the signal which should inform him that his bloody associate was at hand.

It wanted a full hour of midnight, when Martha, carrying the candle along with her, wished the Jew a good night, and withdrew. Noah was not, however, left in absolute darkness, for a few embers still burned, and he took care, by raking together as many cinders as could be gathered from beneath, from time to

time to feed them. It is strange that even the most hardened villain should feel less at ease in the dark, than when some rays of light are streaming round him; yet that the case is so, all experience proves; and never was more decided testimony brought forward to the justice of the conclusion, than Noah's conduct, on the present occasion, furnished. He nursed the little spark with the most scrupulous care and economy, placing over the live coal only as many pieces of fuel as would serve to hinder the flame from utterly expiring; and having drawn his chair close to it, planted himself in such a position as to interrupt as much as possible the current of air. This done, he laid his watch upon the table, as if the circumstance of being able to notice how time passed, would cause it to pass more quickly; and pulling a dark lantern from his pocket, trimmed and arranged it, that nothing might require consideration when the moment of action came.

In the meanwhile, the night, which had from the first looked louringly, began to overcast. Sudden gusts of wind, accompanied by smart showers, came up from the south, and striking

full upon the casement of the room in which the Israelite sat, produced a sound by no means acceptable to one in his circumstances. Noah started as the leaden window-frame rattled to the blast, and gazed with an anxious eye, sometimes towards the spot, sometimes at his watch, whilst a sort of imprecation upon his associate's tardiness rose involuntarily to his lips. "Will the rogue fail me?" said he to himself, as he observed the hands of the timekeeper point to the stipulated moment, yet received no intimation that Bushell was near. "Is he more of a coward than of a ruffian after all? Let me have him once in this scrape, and then I think I shall be able to make my own terms with him." He had scarcely pronounced these words, when two gentle taps on the back-door announced that Bushell was true to his pledge; and the pedlar, rising with greater alacrity than might have been expected from a person of his years, undid the fastenings, and his comrade entered.

"This is an ugly night," said Bushell shivering, either from cold, or violent nervous excitement, or both. "And it is bad for our purpose too. The roads are wet and plashy, and

it is impossible for me, at least, to go about the house, without leaving prints of my feet behind.—Hadn't we better defer this business till to-morrow?"

"After every other preparation hash been made, Mashter Jan; after de old fool is ash drunk ash von beesht, and Martha sound ashleep? No, no, it must be done now, or not done at all."

"But my foot-marks will betray me," replied Bushell. "See here," lifting up his leg, "the very bricks retain the impression; and what do you think boards and matting will do?"

"Vy den, pull off your shoes, you vill valk lighter, and make less noise witdout them; and we don't want to disturb any body, you know."

The Jew busied himself as he spoke, in blowing up a piece of smouldering wood into a flame, to which he applied the candle from his lantern. It ignited more suddenly than Bushell, at least, expected; and he started as if the glare, thus suddenly produced, were the effect of something more than a natural cause.

"Thou art timid, Jan," said the Jew with a sneer.

"Timid, Jew!" replied Bushell, "no; but commonly prudent. There are chinks in that shutter, through which any passer-by must see the flame which you have very needlessly excited. I know my way to the old fellow's room; and we don't want light to help us in the work we have to do there."

"Pull off your shoes, then, and lead on," said the Jew, as he placed the candle in the lantern, and effectually obscured it. Bushell did as he was desired; and receiving the lantern into his hand, groped forward through the passage.

The ruffians reached the chamber-door, Bushell in front, the Jew close behind, without exciting the smallest alarm; and they found it as indeed Noah had taken care they should, —ajar. It was pushed open, and the heavy breathing of the sleeper guided them towards the spot where he lay. Here Bushell's courage failed him. He stopped, returned the lantern to his companion, and, in a whisper, declared that he had not the heart to proceed. "What! and relinquish all?" said the Israelite—"house, monish, business, a settlement for life, and re-

venge! Thou art but a chicken-hearted villain, after all, Jan;—I will do de deed."

As he spoke he drew up the tin case of the lantern, and a stream of light falling strongly over the bed, discovered the smith lying upon his back, and buried in profound slumber. Noah approached him, but the sleeping man moved at the moment, and, closing the case hastily, he shrunk back again.

"My arm is took weak," whispered he. "If he resist, I shall hardly succeed in mastering him. Thou must do it. It is but a firm clutch, and all will be over in a minute."

"Nay, then, here goes," replied the younger ruffian, wound up, as it seemed, to desperation. "Hold the light down,—so, so, and now——"

He did not pause to finish the sentence, but throwing himself with all his might upon the stomach of the sleeping man, grasped him tightly by the throat. A few convulsive struggles followed, but they availed nothing to free the suffocating smith from his murderer, who pressed him down with the strength of a giant, and held his gripe till life was wholly extinct.

"Now, then," whispered the Jew, who had

taken no other part in the transaction besides being an unmoved spectator, "thou hast done thy business well. Cover up the carrion, and let us begone."

"Cover it up thyself, coward," replied Bushell, rushing furiously from the chamber. "I have had too much hand in the matter already, whilst thou, old tempter, stood by and did nothing."

He had regained the kitchen, and was eagerly buckling on a shoe ere this speech came to a close; but the pedlar found leisure enough to arrange the dead man's bed, and rejoin him, before he could make good his retreat. One of his shoes was missing; the friends searched for it every where, but to no purpose,—it was not to be found.

"In the name of fortune!" cried Bushell, "what has become of it? I left it here by the fireside, but now it is gone; and I of course am ruined."

"We shall both be ruined if you linger here much longer," said the pedlar, after vainly aiding in the search. "You must escape to your own house without it, and leave me to find

it if it be above ground." Bushell felt that there was truth in this observation; an indescribable sense of horror, moreover, urged him to abandon the scene of guilt without delay; and though he could not shut his eyes to the hazard of leaving such a proof of his presence behind, even the dread of discovery failed to operate with a counterbalancing weight against it. He rushed from the door unshod as he was, and the Jew, closing it after him, extinguished the light.

"Thou art in the toils as surely as ever foolish mouse was lured into the trap," said he; "and if I make not a good thing of thee, den am I no true child of my fader. This housh is mine; and thou shalt work for my profit as long as it shall suit my convenience."

The callous ruffian threw himself upon his rug; and when Martha came in in the morning, she found him fast asleep.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE PARISH APPRENTICE.

It is scarcely necessary to say, that the sudden death of old Smeltum soon became known throughout the parish, and that it produced every where a strong sensation. No suspicion of foul play was however excited; for, in the first place, the corpse presented only such appearances as usually attach to one who has died of apoplexy; and, in the next place, there were no reasonable grounds upon which to charge any one with harbouring an evil design towards him. Every thing in the house was seen to be in the very same state in which it had been when the family retired to rest. No attempt at robbery had been made; nothing of value was missing; nor was a single article of furniture displaced or injured; and, as the Jew averred

that he had heard no noise during the night, suspicion was entirely put to sleep.

The consequence was, that no investigation took place as to the causes of Smeltum's decease. It was, by general consent, pronounced to be natural,—or, to speak more correctly, to have been occasioned by drinking to excess,—and the smith was laid, with due solemnity, beside other "forefathers of the hamlet."

In the meanwhile, John Bushell, with a self-possession hardly to be expected from him, repaired as usual to the forge, and, among all who expressed surprise and regret at the sudden demise of its owner, none conducted himself with greater decorum than he. It seemed as if so unlooked for a termination of the old man's career had obliterated every angry feeling from his memory, and he now spoke as if the kindnesses which he had received in early life alone retained a place there. But whilst he affected to grieve over the catastrophe, Bushell possessed too much cunning to risk any conjecture as to the probable causes of it; on the contrary, he made it appear, that, according to his conception of things, the

matter was altogether of a common order,—nay, he taxed his memory for facts, or, which served the same purpose, invented fictions, for the purpose of satisfying others, that of a tendency to apoplexy old Smeltum had often exhibited symptoms. Between the Jew and him, moreover, little or no intercourse took place. The former departed on the evening of the very day when the fatal discovery was made; and he did not return till many months had elapsed, and the scheme, thus desperately begun, had received its accomplishment.

Time passed, and Bushell failed not, as may easily be imagined, to turn it to the best advantage. He acted the part of a sincere friend towards Martha, conducting the business for her, helping to adjust her affairs, and otherwise aiding her with his skill and counsel. It would have been strange had the partiality which she long entertained for him, failed to receive a fresh impetus under such circumstances. But a few weeks had expired from the day of the funeral, ere all minor arrangements were completed between them; and before the third moon had changed, the

banns were published. Finally, John Bushell took to wife the daughter of his late master, and attained, in virtue of that union, the height of his ambition.

But, though thus put in possession of what had long been the great object of his desires, the murderer soon discovered, that even success, however complete, will not compensate for the use of such means as he had been tempted to employ. His avarice was gratified, it is true, for the smith left behind him a larger property than he had been supposed to possess, and Bushell was not a man to squander it away; but the voice of conscience he found it impracticable to stifle; and the fear of discovery ceased not for a moment to torment him. Besides, the Jew's demands remained yet to be satisfied; and the thought of giving up half of what had been so hardly earned, to a miscreant, whom he both hated and despised, was scarcely less afflicting than remorse itself. But John knew that he was in the pedlar's power; he more than half suspected him of being disposed to exercise it; and, next to receiving intelligence that Noah was dead, he longed

ardently once more to see and converse with him.

In this state things continued—John, restless and uneasy, amid his property; Martha, hardly less so in consequence of the increasing brutality of her husband's temper—for about two years and a half; during the whole of which period Noah Levi came not near the place. As he had never absented himself from the neighbourhood for so long a space before, people began to apprehend that some evil had befallen him; and John, readily giving credence to what he desired to be true, was preparing to adopt a similar opinion, when, to the joy of the parishioners in general, and the undisguised mortification of the smith, honest Levi once more presented himself at the forge. Time had wrought more than its usual effects upon the Israelite. His form was now bent almost double; his hair and beard were no longer grizzled, but white; whilst his eye retained little of its brilliancy; his voice was become cracked and broken; and his manner had lost the whole of that levity and humour which formerly characterised it. In one respect, however,

Noah seemed to have undergone no change: he was still as sharp as he had ever been in driving a bargain; and the nearer he approached to the land where wealth ceases to be valuable, the more intently were his faculties applied in seeking to amass it. Though anxious, for the most obvious of all reasons, to transact business with his friend Bushell, he had been unable to resist the temptation of loitering by the way, wherever an opportunity of turning a penny presented itself,—and hence his presence in the country was not known to John, till after almost all his neighbours were aware of it. But it became known to him sufficiently early to renew in full violence those personal fears, which had of late begun to torment him less continually; and no great while elapsed, ere proofs were furnished, that for such there was at least some ground.

It was on a pleasant evening in April, about half an hour after sunset, that Bushell was interrupted in his labours by a visitant, whom of all others he at that moment least desired to see. The smith was standing with his back to the doorway, surrounded by half a dozen plough-

servants, busied in smelting some old iron into shape, and occasionally shovelling up a spoonful of coals as the furnace required it; when he was suddenly accosted in a voice and after a manner which, once heard, there was no possibility of mistaking. Bushell dropped his pincers and shovel, as he would have dropped a heated bar; and turning hurriedly round, beheld the Jew, loaded as usual beyond his strength, at his elbow.

"Vat, Jan, still as industrious as ever!" exclaimed Noah, in a tone half-ironical, half-serious. "If ould Shmeltum could look up from his grave, he would hardly regret that his savings had passed into so close a gripe. Thou knowest how to keep a hold when thou gettest it, dat I can vouch for."

"Devil!" exclaimed Bushell, forgetting himself on the impulse of the moment,—"I had hoped that thou wert dead and damned months ago:—what brings thee hither?"

"A leetle business, Mashter Shmight," replied Noah, "between thee and me; a small account to be settled, in which the balance, I take it, ish rather against thee, and in my favour."

"Indeed!" said Bushell, recovering his self-

command in a moment. "I had forgotten that any such account was outstanding. But you have it doubtless in black and white, and can produce it."

"By all means," replied the Jew, putting his hand into a wallet that hung at his side, and dragging out a shoe. "I always keep it in dis —in dis—look ye, do ye know it?"

Bushell staggered back,—for it was the identical shoe which he had been compelled to leave behind on the night of the murder. He saw at a glance for what purpose it had been preserved; and feeling that his only chance of immunity lay in soothing, not irritating, the pedlar, he motioned to him to put it up. "I don't doubt your word, Noah," said he in a subdued tone. "I have known you too long to doubt it; and you know me well enough to believe, that I never meant to wrong you. We will look over the account another time; this evening, after supper if you will; for you take up your old quarters of course?"

"Thank thee, Jan," replied Levi; "we will talk about that anon. In the mean time, I would gladly eat and drink, for I am both hungry and thirsty."

"You shall have the best the house affords," said Bushell, motioning him to follow, and leading at once towards the kitchen. Happily, Martha chanced to be abroad, and the associates lost not the favourable moment to proceed at once to business."

"How comes that shoe in thy possession, Noah?" demanded Bushell in a tone between anger and jeering.

"I gathered it up, friend, when thou went away," replied the Israelite; "and I have carefully preserved it as the best of all proofs, that thou, and not I, did the deed."

"Hell-hound!" exclaimed the smith, "thou canst not say that. Was it not at thy suggestion? wert not thou the propounder of the whole scheme?"

"Who, I?" rejoined Noah. "Not I, so help me the God of my fathers! Besides, you know that I never laid hand upon him; you, and you only, have his blood upon your head."

"But you would not split, would you?" asked Bushell in undisguised alarm. "Surely your own conscience tells you, that our cause is common?"

"I am no traitor, Jan," replied the Jew,

"provided I be fairly dealt with; but more than two years have elapsed without bringing one communication from you, and twenty more might have slid away, had I not come hither to inquire after it. I tell you frankly, that your life is in my hands, and it shall be spared on one condition only. You must make over to me the title-deeds of this estate. The business you shall have at a moderate yearly rent; but, so help me Heaven! if you once fail in paying it, the secret shall come out, and then—take the consequence."

Bushell rose from his chair, paced the room from one corner to another several times, whilst the crafty Israelite watched every movement with a glance of the most perfect self-possession. "Scoundrel!" he at last exclaimed, "in this our bargain, was it not agreed between us to share the booty? and am I not ready to give up thy full portion, whenever it shall be demanded?"

"Ver true," replied Noah; "but during some thirty moons or thereabouts, I have been left in entire ignorance even as to the value of the booty of which you speak; and had I not arrived in my own proper person to inquire

into it, not one syllable of information would have been communicated to me. Look ye, Jan; I am as well disposed as yourself to act with openness. You have broken the contract; and therefore, if you reject my proposal, look to what shall follow."

"But, my dear Noah," continued Bushell, changing his tone, "you would not surely reduce me to a condition worse than I was in before? I tell you, there is not a moment of my sleeping or waking existence, in which the old man fails to haunt me. I see him by day, and I see him by night; he is uppermost in my mind when at work, at my meals, and in my bed; surely you would not rob me of the poor recompense of so much misery?"

"What is thy misery to me?" rejoined the pedlar with perfect composure; "dat is thy own business; but this snug house, de freehold attached, de property in the funds, wid de custom of de shop,—these matters I do regard, and I must have them."

"What if I say no to that proposal?"

"Then thou shalt hang, as sure as my name is Noah Levi."

The conference was here interrupted by the arrival of Martha, whom the pedlar immediately greeted in the subdued manner which distinguished him in other days. Well pleased was she to receive again under her roof a man whom early associations had taught her to esteem; and her preparations to entertain him were commensurate to the degree of satisfaction which his presence manifestly occasioned. But the pedlar, strange to say, appeared indisposed to take advantage of them. Whilst Martha was busy arranging the supper-table, he drew from his bosom a deed, duly endorsed upon parchment, in a fair legal hand; and pushing it over to Bushell, requested him to affix his name at a particular corner which was left blank.

"For what purpose is this?" demanded the smith.

"That you know already," replied Noah; "it remains for you to accomplish it or not, at your pleasure. But——"

"Ruffian!" muttered the smith, "it will avail thee little; but if I must, I must." So saying, he put his hand to the deed; and the entire

property of his murdered father-in-law passed in an instant into the possession of the Jew.

"You stay here to-night?" added Bushell, with an expression of ill-concealed fury in his eye.

"I am sorry that I cannot," replied the Jew, "but I will do what is far better; I will leave thee till Michaelmas to arrange thy affairs, and then I will visit thee again." He rose as he spoke, and, in spite of the entreaties both of Martha and her husband, quitted the house.

During the six months which followed this strange scene, John Bushell's proceedings resembled rather those of an insane person, than of a man in his sober senses. His business was neglected, and he wandered about from place to place, speaking to no one, and taking apparently no interest in any thing that passed around him. His sleep too, which ever since he came to the forge, had been broken and uneasy, went from him entirely; and his temper, always rugged, became absolutely savage. His wife received no gentle treatment at his hands; and his very children (for Martha had brought him two) seemed to be objects of absolute loathing to him.

Wild and incoherent sentences dropped from him, sometimes in his feverish slumbers, sometimes when wide awake; and even the desire to amass money, which, up to the present moment, had shown itself in every proceeding, deserted him. At last, however, Michaelmas approached; and as if he had made up his mind to some novel course, which it would require all his energy to follow, he suddenly returned to his old habits. The forge was again frequented, and business resumed with the same assiduity as formerly; his temper became gentle, pliable, and easy; and his very wife appeared at least to receive her share of the kindness which was lavished upon all. It is needless to say, that such conduct led to numerous guesses and surmises among the parishioners; but John Bushell had always been to them a riddle, and could scarcely be said to have become more unintelligible of late, than he was formerly.

Michaelmas came at length, and with it came the Jew: punctual to the day appointed. This time he paused nowhere to drive bargains; but making straight for the forge, was welcomed with much seeming cordiality, both by

Bushell and his wife. Either the old man's shrewdness had deserted him, or Bushell played his part to admiration, for Noah scrupled not on this occasion to put himself completely in the power of one whom he knew to be both daring and desperate. He became the guest of his tenant; and, as my guide to Team-hill had informed me, was never heard of from that night forward.

The truth is, that Bushell, feeling or fancying that his life, or that of the Jew, must be sacrificed, made up his mind to avert his own fate, by hastening on that of his treacherous associate. It was not however, as he himself affirmed, without a violent struggle, that he arrived at this desperate determination. The blood of one victim weighed already so heavily upon his soul, that the thought of adding another to the load could not, for many weeks, be admitted; but avarice, and a powerful feeling of self-preservation, overcame, in the end, every other consideration, and the Jew was devoted to destruction from the hour in which Bushell resumed his habits of industry. The old man blindly ran into the snare. He was artfully inveigled into a loose declaration, that he designed to pro-

secute his journey ere the family should be stirring in the morning; and care having been taken that this should be said in the hearing of witnesses, the smith looked upon his main difficulty as overcome; he was not deceived, for the Jew was already in his dotage.

Martha, by her husband's orders, provided for them that night a substantial supper; and having seen that the means of continuing the carouse were abundant, in case the two friends should feel disposed to indulge, she withdrew, at a given signal. The movement was not lost upon the pedlar, who, though far from being the man that he once was, retained still some portion of his original sagacity, and he instantly demanded of Bushell the cause of an arrangement so unusual.

"You spoke of leaving us early," replied the smith; "and as we have some important business to settle, I thought we had best take time by the forelock, and settle it to-night. How stand our accounts?"

"You owe me," replied the Jew, producing the deed of settlement, "exactly three years' rent of these tenements, and interest for two years and a half on four hundred pounds five per

cents., which with compound interest will amount in all to one hundred and thirty pounds. But I was never harsh to a good tenant; so I will remit thee, for old friendship's sake, the odd thirty, and give thee a discharge in full for the hundred."

"Thou shalt have it, good Noah, with thanks," answered Bushell. "But tell me, worthy Master Levi, what that pack of thine contains. Art cheating wherever thou goest, as usual, vending baubles for things of value? or is thy cargo really something worth this time, seeing thou hast disposed of so little of it?"

"I am no cheat, friend Jan, as thou canst testify; indeed, I never sell aught except at a loss, God help me! But I'll tell thee what,—de little box is richly laden this trip. I am from Paris, and carry to London articles fit only for de London market."

"Well, well, I wish thee luck, Noah.—But drink, man; fill thy glass again; 'tis rare Hollands,—never paid the King's duty, I trow; there is no headach in a gallon."

"One glass more, with all my heart," replied the Jew; "but as we have not such business in hand to-night as when last I sat drinking

here, we need not drain the bottle too deeply. Ah! that was a snug job. Hast forgotten, Jan, how the old fellow kicked and struggled? Truly, thou art a lusty dog to keep thy hold; I thought at one time he would have cast thee off."

"Nay, nay, let that pass," replied the smith, pushing the liquor towards him. "'Twas an ugly business, and ought to be forgotten by both."

"So it is, so it is, now that there is fair play between us; only things fall out strangely. 'Twas on this very night, three years ago, that he and I sat at this very table, and drank from this very bottle;—and where is he now?"

"Where thou shalt be in a moment," cried Bushell, who had approached the old man unheeded, and now seizing him furiously by the throat, threw him to the ground.—"The trick is thine own, hoary ruffian!" he continued, seating himself at the same time on the pedlar's stomach, and forcibly suppressing his breath. "I thank thee for teaching it, chiefly because I am permitted to play it off upon thyself." But the pedlar was not to be vanquished as old Smeltum had been, seeing that his senses were not

stupified with drink; and though incapable of a successful resistance against a man in the full vigour of youth, he nevertheless struggled with the energy of despair. He displaced the hand which covered his mouth and nose, uttered a shrill and piteous cry, and would have repeated it, had not the smith changed his mode of attack, ere time was allowed to draw breath. With a giant's strength he tore the old man's head forward towards his breast, and casting himself with all his might upon it, dislocated the neck in an instant. But the cry, though short and somewhat stifled, had not been emitted in vain. The murderer still sat upon his victim, when the door of the room burst open, and his wife, breathless with horror and alarm, stood before him.

"Woman!" shrieked Bushell, rising and grasping her violently by the arm, "you have seen that which you ought not to have seen; but know this, that the brute who now lies there stark and stiff, took away the life of your father, and would have reduced your children to beggary. Swear therefore, over his corpse, that the secret of this night shall never be divulged, or, by Heaven! you share his fate."

Poor Martha's brain swam round. She repeated the words of the oath which her savage husband dictated, and reeled, rather than walked, back to her own chamber; but from that moment her intellects were never settled, and she became within the twelvemonth utterly insane. Bushell, however, looked not to her. Having carefully stripped the pack of every thing valuable, made himself master of the deed of assignment, and emptied the pedlar's pockets, he removed the body to a place of concealment which he had long prepared for it; and so prudently had his plans been arranged that it rested there, unsought for, during a space of more than thirty years. No one, indeed, dreamed of inquiring, what had become of the Jew. He was believed to have taken his departure, as he threatened to do, early in the morning after his arrival at the forge,—and if he never returned, the fact seemed sufficiently accounted for, by his age and increasing infirmities.

The remainder of this bloody tale is told in few words. Put once more in possession of his ill-gotten gains, and enriched by the plunder of his associate, Bushell began, before long, to look higher in the world; and the farm of

Team-hill falling vacant, he applied for a lease, and obtained it. The forge, however, no bribe would tempt him either to sell or to let. Many advantageous offers were made, but he rejected them all; and at last, to the surprise and regret of the parishioners at large, the building was pulled down. In its place a barn was erected, which, though at an apparently inconvenient distance from his dwelling, Bushell persisted in using, after he had, with uncommon care, and at a very considerable expense, boarded it over.

For a short time after his removal to Team-hill, Bushell affected a hospitality and openness of manner which sat not well upon him. He took a leading part in parish matters, too; attended all vestries, undertook the most laborious offices, and discharged them with ability and credit; yet his neighbours could not bring themselves to regard him with any other eye besides that of distrust and suspicion. Very few would visit him, and fewer still spoke of him in other terms besides those of unmitigated dislike; till, professing to be disgusted with their envy of his prosperity, he withdrew himself from society altogether. Much about

the same time the eldest of his children died; and his wife, who had not recovered the shock occasioned by the scene of which she was a witness, went raving mad. He removed her, without delay, to an asylum no one knew where, and hired a housekeeper, whom, with an unaccountable inconsistency, he paid extravagantly, to keep her about him; but little advantage accrued from this change. His own conscience could not be lulled asleep; and as his parsimony prevented him from drowning it in liquor, it preyed upon him day and night. His temper became more and more harsh, more and more sullen, more and more austere. His second child, driven from her home by the severity of her father, became a common prostitute, and perished miserably in London. Every thing, in short, went wrong with him, save his pecuniary affairs, and from the flourishing condition of these he derived no solid gratification.

In this manner the wretched man dragged on for many years an existence as worthless to himself as to others; suffering, as he frankly confessed, all the torments of the damned. One good or generous action he was never

known to have performed; and he died at last, not only unregretted, but universally abhorred. Yet his wealth perished not with him: the whole of it was bequeathed to public charities, with the vain and superstitious hope expressed in his will, that the use to which it was applied might perhaps atone for the means adopted in its accumulation.

It is only necessary to add, that after Bushell himself had been committed to the dust, a search was, at my suggestion, instituted, for the bones of the Jew. It was not unsuccessful. The boarded floor of the new barn being removed, a skeleton was found, bent completely double, about three feet under ground, just beneath the spot where the great anvil used to stand; and no doubt can exist, that that very hole, from which Levi had so often drawn his dishonest gains, became at last his grave.

THE END.

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